

**NEW IRISH BALLADS—by Arthur Stringer.**

VOL 28 No 3

**JULY**  
1909

PRICE 25cts

# THE SMART SET

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AZINE  
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**“OUR  
FOREIGN  
PRINCESSES”—**

A clever  
satirical essay  
on

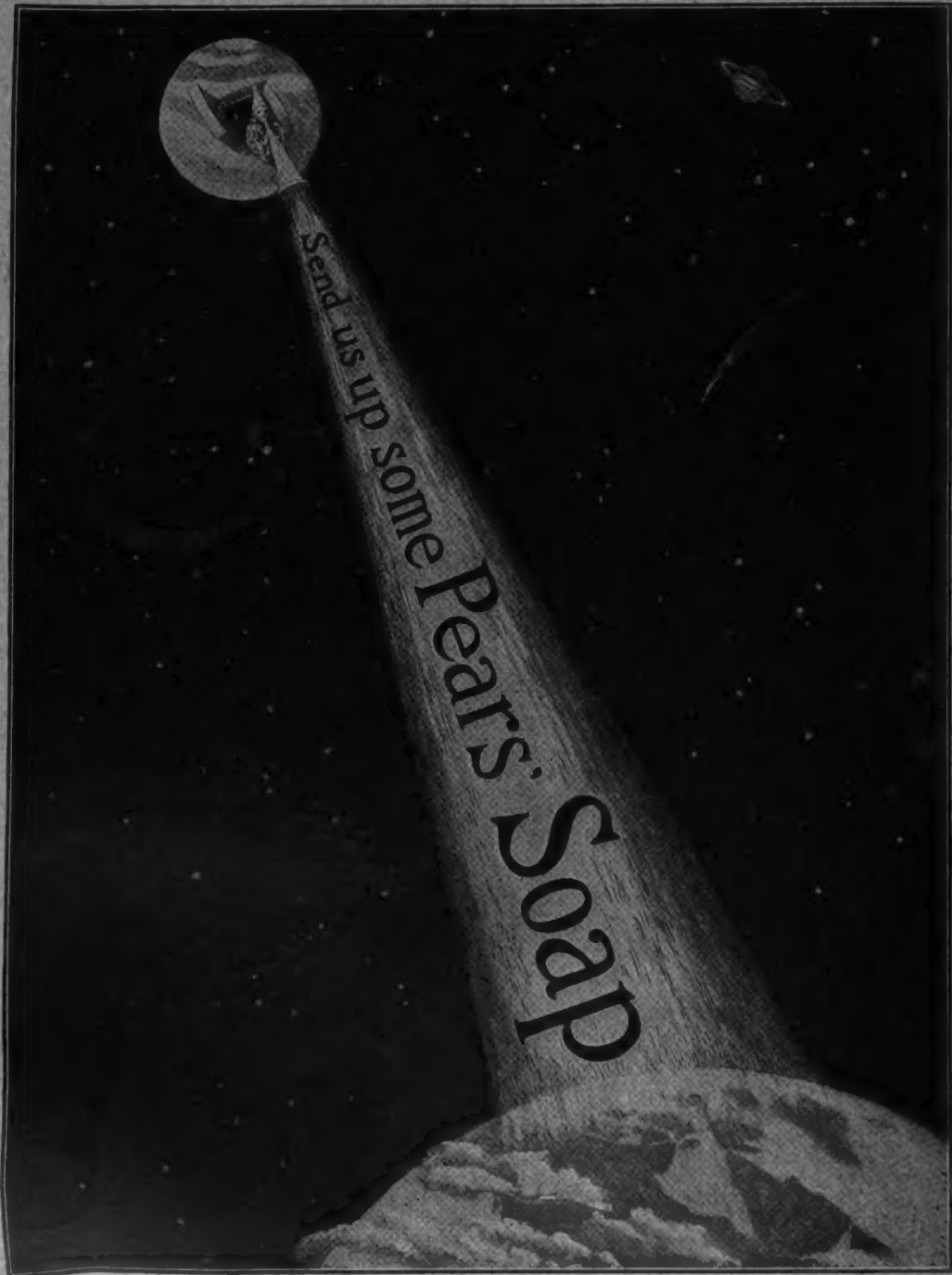
**International Marriages—  
by  
EDGAR SALTUS.**

LONDON

Published by The Eschscholtz Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York

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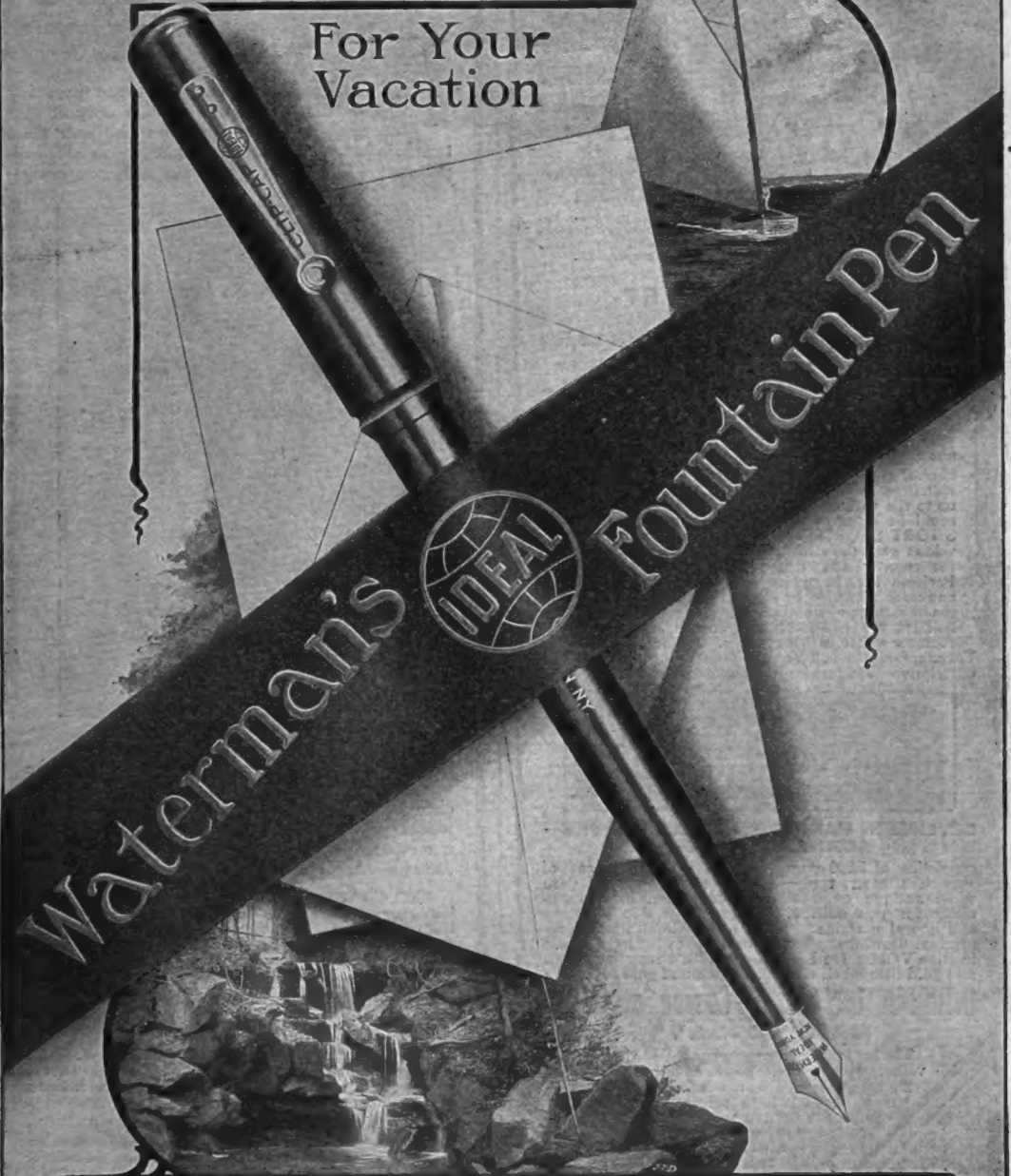


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INTRODUCTION BY  
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327 Short Stories, Novels, Travels, Drama, Comedies and Verse

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LEO CRANE

throughout. There is a wonderful description of the more intimate incidents attending the great San Francisco earthquake, and the dénouement of the story, worked out in the midst of that terrible scene of ruin, is most striking and beautiful. Miss Wolf's story is one of the strong novels of the year.

LEO CRANE, whose work has been featured in the leading magazines, contributes to the August number one of his very best pieces of work, "Uncharted," a tale of a life sailing perilously near the shoals for the want of a friendly directing hand. The story is one of intense action.

THE VACATION SEEKER will find splendid reading in this August number. "Mid-Sea Madness," by Florida Pier, is a remarkable tale of shipboard life. Every transatlantic voyager will recognize the likelihood of the situation presented.

"AN EXPERIMENTAL JOURNEY," by W. H. G. Wyndham Martyn, is a story that will appeal to every lover of automobiles—particularly those who can look back with kindly feeling to their first trip at the wheel.

"MY WIFE AND I," by Charles F. Read, throws the spotlight on the unrealized romance of middle age. There is a delicious charm about this story that will warm the heart of every reader, of whatever age.

GELETT BURGESS, Jules Eckert Goodman, Archibald Sullivan, William Hamilton Osborne, Charles Battell Loomis, Crittenden Marriott, Mary Glascock, and Roland Franklin Andrews are numbered among the August contributors—the pick of the short-story and feature writers of the day.

A valuable feature for all magazine readers—the contents of the various leading magazines for the current month appear in THE SMART SET.

ON SALE JULY 15



Vol. XXVIII

# THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

No. 3

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(A summary of the contents of the leading magazines of the month.)

Yearly Subscription \$2.50

Single Copies 25 Cents

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Entered at New York Post Office as second-class mail matter

Issued monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company

WILLIAM D. MANN, President

452 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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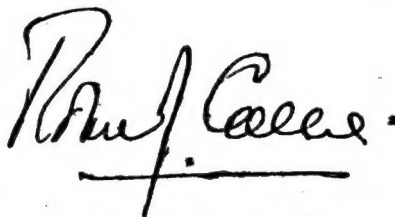
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# T H E R E S E

By HELEN TALBOT KUMMER

*There will no man do for your sake, I think,  
What I have done for the least word said.  
I have wrung life dry for your lips to drink,  
Broken it up for your daily bread.*

SWINBURNE.

"H E is," said Mrs. Van Vleet with decision, "the handsomest man I have ever seen."

The Contessa dei Valencia stirred slightly in her deep chair, and laid upon the table the empty cup whose painted bottom she had been studying.

"*Chère madame*, your enthusiasms are so generous," she intimated delicately.

Mrs. Van Vleet began to draw on her gloves. "Come and see for yourself," she urged. "My portrait awaits your inspection, and the painter your criticism."

The Contessa smiled. "I fear your sentence should be inverted," she hinted blandly. "The handsomest man that Mrs. Van Vleet ever saw must surely be above my poor criticism, though his art may not. I wonder, *chère madame*, that this paragon does not paint exclusively from a mirror."

Mrs. Van Vleet rose with dignity. "Will you come?" she demanded with characteristic bluntness.

The Contessa rose also. "Since I promised—yes," she sighed. "I will join you in a moment."

She left her visitor in her flower-filled salon, looking down on the Avenue de l'Alma, and sought her mirror.

When she returned, Mrs. Van Vleet, pouncing upon her costume in a glance as it were, opened her mouth for triumphant speech, then with unwonted tact heroically refrained, though the

confection in which her friend stood arrayed for conquest was a tacit confession of belief in the new discovery.

The Contessa, affecting unconscious serenity, trailed her gray draperies to the sidewalk and languidly raised a sunshade against the hot, golden rain of sunlight which poured through the thin green of the budding trees.

"Rue d'Assas—28," said Mrs. Van Vleet to her footman.

The Contessa sighed again undisguisedly as she settled herself.

"What a journey! What an interminable journey!" she complained. "Who but you and I, *chère madame*, would drive on the Rive Gauche to the abominable Rue d'Assas on a sunny May afternoon? The Bois now—the Avenue des Acacias—"

"Banal," said Mrs. Van Vleet with contempt. "One can drive in the Avenue des Acacias any afternoon and be bored, but every afternoon one cannot make the acquaintance of a young Narcissus who is also a genius."

"Narcissus! Oh-h!" said the Contessa.

She fell into a moment's smiling meditation, then opening her cardcase, looked with deliberation at herself in a tiny mirror set therein.

Mrs. Van Vleet watched her with amusement and some envy.

The lady, unheeding, continued her inspection of a countenance which was the despair of her contemporaries. No one could or ever did call her beautiful, yet the merely beautiful sighed for pallid irregularity, could this but insure her startling fascination. Her hair, intensely blue-black, and her skin, very pale, were accentuated by the vivid



scarlet of her mouth, but chiefly in her gray-green eyes under black lashes lay the secret of her spell.

Flexible as a willow, she wore with swaying grace the loose, sweeping folds which she affected.

Mrs. Van Vleet, who was pink and light-haired, and filled her gowns with uncomfortable exactitude, knew that it required equanimity and the consciousness of unblemished Dutch descent, as well as a large bank account, to sit in the same victoria with the Contessa dei Valencia.

In the Rue d'Assas the horses came to a halt before an unimposing façade, where repeated ringings of a cracked bell elicited only an unencouraging lack of movement within. Without, as well, the street was so quiet that the restless hoofs of the horses rang sharply upon the stones. In the distance the trees of the Luxembourg waved their plummy tops against the pale turquoise of the sky. From under the awning of a little wine shop at the corner of the street came a man's clear tenor laugh and the tinkle of glasses.

A final and determined assault upon the unresponsive portal wakened a scurry of feet, followed by the sharp smack of a broad palm against a defenseless portion of some unseen but singularly resounding human anatomy.

"Chameau!" screamed a voice in a fury, and the door swung open to reveal a red and panting *concierge*, with a small boy in blouse and *sabots* impounded by the scruff of his neck.

The Contessa shrank back and put her hands to her ears.

"Chère madame, you would come," she said plaintively. "I object to *argot*, and I think your Narcissus has fallen into the mud of the pool."

Mrs. Van Vleet laid a hand on her friend's arm with a shade of earnestness, her blue Dutch blood rising at what she perhaps secretly stigmatized as an attitude of anemic snobbishness.

"Don't jest," she implored. "Think what such surroundings must mean to the poor boy. He is miles removed

from all this. Fancy yourself in two rooms on this street."

The Contessa shuddered, but allowed herself to be drawn forward into the house, where an affronted *concierge*, speechless from mingled surprise and indignation, stood aside to let them pass, releasing at the same time the object of her wrath. That urchin, profiting by this moment of forgetfulness, made good his escape with a derisive clatter of dreadful *sabots*.

Inside, a narrow and very dirty hall, with a flight of steps running up into abysmal gloom, led into an ill kept garden, down both sides of which stretched a row of wooden gates painted green, each with a rusty number.

Mrs. Van Vleet hurried down the flagged walk, followed daintily by her friend, whose lifted skirt in itself was a whole volume of disapprobation and distaste.

Gate number seven swung creakingly and unwillingly to receive them, and behind in a second garden stood a sort of pavilion, at whose door Mrs. Van Vleet knocked with the green jade handle of her much laced sunshade. There was a decided pause, then footsteps sounded within and the door was opened by a man in a loose gray tweed coat. He looked unsmilingly into Mrs. Van Vleet's face and haughtily over her head into the eyes of her companion, who was examining him with bland curiosity.

"How nice to find you at home, Mr. Trevis," said Mrs. Van Vleet with her best manner and a curious forgetfulness of the little note commanding his presence in the studio that afternoon.

If Mrs. Ben Van Vleet had not been Dutch, stout and forty, with a Boston upbringing, she would have been deeply in love with the man before her. She might even have been so notwithstanding these obstacles, but for a saving quality of blunt honesty with herself and a very American sense of humor. As it was she contented herself with a platonic interest

in his career, and her scheming to bring about a meeting between him and the Contessa dei Valencia had for its ultimate object a portrait of the lady. This she believed would win him celebrity, and incidentally unlimited orders, since the Contessa was *par excellence* a wit and an *élégante*, whose minutely chronicled movements were always sure of a host of eager imitators.

Other considerations than these intensely practical and commercial arrangements did not enter Mrs. Ben's head, or if they did, a word of warning to the artist, a hint that his patroness was a woman noted for her charm and her conquests, would put him on his guard and prevent his being made a fool of, if nothing else.

By which it will be seen that despite her forty years Mrs. Van Vleet still possessed some remnants of *naïveté*.

But to the man holding open the door of his shabby studio and bowing with the same fine air with which he might have welcomed them to a palace, her plans did not present themselves in quite the same light. As the curious, smiling eyes of Maria Valencia looked into his he suddenly felt intolerably humiliated. They spoke to him so plainly of Mrs. Van Vleet's manœuvres. For a moment the glamor, the high ideals of his art which he had nursed in poverty and solitude, were turned to bitterness. He felt like a shopkeeper to whom this aristocratic and disdainful woman had come with her purse in her hand and a careless order on her lips, and that the largeness of that order depended upon his own powers of ingratiating.

At the thought he unconsciously threw his head back with a gesture which his visitor noted from under her lashes as she passed him and stepped into the studio beyond.

Those who have starved in order to dream are overtender to the stare or smile of the worldly, and with that instant comprehension which in her amounted to inspiration she di-

vined him in a moment. At the same time she permitted herself an inward smile of malice, as with outward respect she surveyed his workshop, and held out a distant hand in response to Mrs. Van Vleet's impressive introduction.

It was a bare room, void of most things except those pertaining to the craft of the artist. Here were no glowing embroideries, no choice bronzes, no rare china nor priceless rugs. Its bare white walls and cold gray light had certainly never resounded to the tinkling of teacups, nor glowed with the soft colors and pretty jewels of woman's presence. The waxed floor stretched a yellow waste to the model throne; there were a few chairs, a threadbare couch, the easel, and of course innumerable studies, sketches and finished canvases.

They seemed to have been accumulating for some time.

The artist, however, appeared superbly unconscious of their mute betrayal. He placed chairs for his visitors in silence, then going toward the portrait which occupied the easel, he turned it more into the light.

"It is finished," he said simply, and stood aside. Mrs. Van Vleet approached and grew enthusiastic over "treatment" and "tone." The Contessa, under the soft gray plumes of her hat, put up a jeweled eyeglass and a pair of expressive brows.

The portrait was really good. Mrs. Van Vleet's pinkness and stoutness had been preserved, yet idealized. The likeness was perfect, the treatment extremely simple in defiance of Mrs. Ben's somewhat florid taste. In spite of the seemingly unpromising subject, it was a distinct achievement in its way—a sort of triumph of mind over matter.

The Contessa dropped her eyeglass and rose.

"Mrs. Van Vleet has reason to congratulate herself on having you do her portrait, Mr. Trevis," she said in her sweetest voice. "I wonder"—her hesitation was charming—"I wonder if I also might not be so fortunate as to persuade you—"

She paused again and her gray-green magnetic eyes sought his with the softest appeal. To Trevis, braced for insolence and patronage, the tone, the manner, were balm. Figuratively he had stood sword in hand and shield on arm, and she smote him with a flower.

His look softened, melting for a bewildering instant into hers.

"You are very kind, Contessa," he said gravely. "I should count myself only doubly fortunate if you would allow me to paint you solely for the great pleasure it would give me, and after an idea which I have long had in mind."

It had come upon him with sudden force, even in the act of speaking, that he would never accept money from this woman for any picture of his. In that moment he could not have analyzed the feeling which actuated him. He only knew that he could not, and with the words the delight and charm of his art possessed him afresh.

He was aware also on the instant that he had arrested profoundly the fleeting and capricious attention of the spoiled worldling before him.

She turned her head and looked at him more attentively than she had yet done, and beyond the careless admiration which had been her first impression there awoke a new respect and interest. She had come there, affably willing at her friend's behest to bestow a coveted commission on that friend's protégé, who from the miasmas of his obscurity could only regard her patronage as an immense condescension or a charity. She had come half skeptical of Mrs. Ben's eulogies, yet determined to be amiable and hopeful of being amused, expecting, however, only to find avidity of patronage, mediocrity and an eagerness to ingratiate.

But these things did not dwell in the shabby pavilion of the Rue d'Assas.

She smiled suddenly, and to Trevis her pale face was dazzling.

"I do not think I could accept such a sacrifice of your time as that—" she began doubtfully, when he interrupted her with a decision which was almost abrupt.

"I will not paint the picture under any other conditions," he said with a brevity almost rude, yet strangely enough holding a ring of pleading. Skilled player upon the emotions of others that she was, she was quick to detect an overtone; and it seemed to her that here, struggling through a pride which would not be patronized, was a still more personal note. Nor did she make the mistake of supposing his proposition a mere flattery calculated for more ultimate gain. His attitude as he stood before her was far too independent for that; and with her sphinx's smile she thought to read a more subtle meaning.

As she did not answer, he went on: "There are things in art that one regards as almost sacred. One does not class them with his work, but with his dreams—"

He broke off as Mrs. Van Vleet, who had been examining her portrait with great minuteness, fluttered up and drew him unceremoniously away to suggest some trifling change, which she imagined displayed her knowledge of the technicalities of art to imposing advantage.

The Contessa, subsiding onto the shabby divan, watched, chin in hand, the artist as he stood beside the voluble lady, bending his tall head with courteous gravity as he listened to her suggestions. Certainly his appearance was sufficiently unusual and striking. He had the dark and rich coloring of the South with the poetic and classic beauty which sometimes accompanies it; yet his bearing, his impassivity, were as English as his name and lent a certain sternness and almost hardness to his whole manner and personality.

As she watched him she smiled with frank self-analysis at the thought of how she had come there idly bent on a facile conquest which should furnish amusement for an hour of the shining May afternoon. She had even thought to make merry afterward to her friend over his probable awkwardness, his obscurity, his dauber's pretensions. Yet, now as she observed him with secret approval before the picture he had evoked as by a spell and



changed from mere banality to something approaching inspiration, a new consideration presented itself to her.

What if—what if—

Her portrait had been painted before by artists of great renown—and price. Their “arrangements” of drapery or color had been exquisite, but to her critic’s eye the paintings remained mere reproductions. No one of their creators had loved her, therefore none had done more than paint the woman as he beheld her.

But she had dreamed of what the poetic and impassioned imagination of one who did love her might achieve—not only the woman of clay but the woman of immortal fantasy—the woman as he beheld her, but also the woman of his idealization.

She felt a thrill warm as wine surge suddenly to her very finger tips. Life was a wonderful thing. At every corner, in every byway, lurked the alluring, the unexpected, the impossible.

She rose and strayed toward the canvases on the wall. In many of them the same face appeared, and it was a face that arrested her fastidious and beauty loving eye. The face of a quite young girl, the features Greek in their regularity, classical in their purity, yet without severity. The chestnut hair was weighty and lustrous, the large eyes passionate yet curiously mournful. One might almost have said that in them slumbered a tragedy which would one day inform the whole face.

The Contessa turned around.

“What an interesting head!” she said, pointing with the handle of her sunshade.

The artist approached courteously.

“Yes,” he answered, yet with obvious briefness; “a child’s head merely.”

Maria Valencia noticed the briefness and her eyes narrowed.

“Surely rather a girl’s head than a child’s; and a very beautiful one too,” she corrected carelessly, as she watched him from under her lashes. “I had no idea that there were such lovely models of so elevated a type to be found in the Parisian studios.”

“She is not a model,” he said un-

thinkingly, quick to resent an imputation which he detested, then annoyed with himself for having been drawn into an admission which he wished to avoid he turned away.

Yet why he wished to avoid it was not yet at all clear to himself.

The Contessa, her subtle smile just lifting a corner of her scarlet mouth, put her arm through Mrs. Van Vleet’s and turned toward the door.

Trevis, as he hastened to deplore their departure and to open his portal at their plea of a positive rendezvous for tea, was aware that her eyes as they rested on him had grown cold with a certain sarcastic scrutiny which troubled him intangibly. At the door she turned to him for a moment as Mrs. Van Vleet preceded her down the steps.

“I really wish you to do my portrait, very much,” she said, still with that coldness which was only a diabolic refinement of coquetry. “I hope to shake your determination to make me so vastly your debtor when we have talked it over together once more. Please come to see me very soon.”

She gave him her hand in its long gray *suede* glove and departed, leaving the room scented by the mass of white and purple violets on her breast.

Trevis turned back into the empty atelier and stood for a moment idle with a vague chill at his heart which nipped the flowers of her earlier graciousness.

What did it matter? he thought. Why should this woman disturb him? Yet her sudden coldness after that bewildering smile which had so dazzled him awoke in him the determination which she had meant to awake—the determination to see her again.

Had he offended her? he wondered. Had he been rude or too absurdly in earnest over a passing acquaintance whose amiabilities neither cost nor implied anything?

Already he began to torment himself.

## II

MICHAEL TREVIS was, as his appearance implied, an abrupt mixture

of Anglo-Saxon traditions and bias and Italian fire, dreaminess and passion.

Of his father, his memories were embittered. The elder Trevis had been a sculptor full of promise in his youth, who wrecked his talents by caprice and dissipation. He had come of English stock, a good county family with generations of respectable tradition clustering about an ivy-embowered country house on a small estate in Essex. But he had thrown tradition to the winds; he had snapped his fingers at respectability; he had laughed to scorn the church, the bar, the army; and one fine night when high words had been passed about some London escapade which threatened evil consequences he had flung out of the house, and soon after out of England.

Paris was his next stopping place, where, until his ready money gave out, he frequented the Latin Quarter and its irrepressible students. Then one of them, pending remittances which did not appear, persuaded him to turn his natural talents to account, and with such faith in these that, himself already scaling the heights, he offered himself as teacher as a speculation, pledging himself to accept payment only in case of success.

The prodigal, allured by the beckoning of this new *ignis fatuus*, applied himself in earnest and to such purpose that his work began to obtain recognition and he received some commissions for busts and decorative groups which he executed with his temperamental brilliancy and inequalities. No one, however, was more surprised than himself when some years later he gained the Prix de Rome.

It was in Italy, when his three years at the Villa Medici were finished, that he completed the severance with his family by falling in love with and marrying an Italian girl whom he discovered in a little roadside inn in Tuscany selling wine. To be sure, the girl was too young to have yet received more than a faint impress of the roughness of her life; and

moreover she was wonderfully beautiful with a classic, glowing beauty which lived again in her son; but she did not in any sense chime with English rose gardens, afternoon tea and the British viewpoint of respectable traditions. So Trevis remained in Italy, which suited him exactly.

When his wife died he was already an old man, by virtue of much living and much experience rather than by passing of years, and it was then that he began to drift.

Later, when his son's talent manifested itself, an artist of renown living in Florence, impatient of the intermittent teaching of the boy's father, bestowed weekly a great many hours of valuable instruction upon him and in return used his beautiful poetic head on more than one successful canvas.

To the boy his art soon became the mainspring of existence. It haunted him "like a passion," and many an enchanted hour did he pass in the big studio, where the high windows let in long dusty bars of sunlight and a big tree outside tapped its branches softly against the panes.

When he was twenty-six years old his father died, leaving a great many debts and one or two last enduring monuments to his undoubted talent.

Thus the younger Trevis was left like an oarless craft cast carelessly upon the waters of life. He felt himself bitterly an alien and an outcast, and when his father's effects were sold and the debt paid, with a few hundred francs in his pockets and undying ambition in his heart, he turned his back on Florence and set his face toward Paris, that remote white city of his dreams, the Mecca of his artistic convictions.

As he had seen it lying before him for the first time in the golden glow of an April afternoon, like a great jewel in the midst of the green and laughing country, it had seemed to him that all fair and unknown things must be waiting him there, and in the full tide of his first spring in Paris his illusion remained unbroken.

It was only after three years of almost fruitless struggle, when no one seemed to want pictures of ideals and he had often been glad to paint a fan or a bit of porcelain to exist, that Paris assumed for him another character.

He seemed to be beating with his desperate hands upon a fast locked door while all about him swirled the glowing tide of self-absorbed life.

### III

WHEN Michael Trevis was ushered into the drawing-room of the Contessa dei Valencia's house in the Avenue de l'Alma he gazed about him with the wonder of a man who suddenly finds himself in a new world.

He was not quite thirty years old, yet he knew with unenviable thoroughness the seamy side of the life of Florence, of Rome and of Paris; but of this gilded and butterfly existence which opened suddenly as a reality before him he knew nothing save in imagination.

The room itself stirred in him the keenest pleasure. Its walls were oak paneled midway, and above were mellow tapestries representing, like a broad frieze around the entire apartment, a green forest glade where groups of fawns and satyrs pursued bands of laughing nymphs. On the bare, polished floor were scattered rugs whose rich hues shone jewel-like through the reposeful dusk that held the glow of amber from the tempered sunlight. All about, among the ivories, the bronzes, the porcelains, which gleamed from every corner, great bowls of white lilac and narcissus were set, their honeyed perfume drifting like a palpable cloud upon the senses.

Through the half-opened windows, where the ceaseless hum of Paris streets entered, were glimpses of swaying, blossom-laden trees, of a windy blue sky, of sun-drenched boulevards stretching to the green and winding river.

He turned his head from the contemplation of the Avenue through the window near which he stood as he felt

the consciousness of a presence beside him.

Madame Valencia had entered as noiselessly as though wafted there upon the incense of the white flowers near her, and stood smiling, watching him curiously from under her lashes. She wore her favorite gray clinging gown, weblike, impalpable as a mist, and a scarlet flower beneath her chin threw out the pallor of her face, the heavy black of her hair, the sweet mockery of her unfathomable glance.

"I hoped you would come today," she said in her silken voice; "yesterday seemed to have left so much unsaid."

She turned and motioned him to the seat beside her, and almost timidly he obeyed, his eyes upon her frail wrist encircled by a string of gray pearls, upon the gossamer of her dress which, drawn tightly about her knees as she sat, flowed out until a fold of it clung to him.

"Yesterday made me feel that in some way I had offended you," he replied at length, while she watched him, leaning her cheek upon her hand—"perhaps in so abruptly refusing your commission. I am afraid you did not understand—"

Her hand flashed out in a gesture of disclaimer. "I understood. You objected to being patronized, as I have no doubt you call it, by me. You are English. What need to say more?"

Trevis looked at her and a slight flush went over his dark face.

"You are right; it was that at first," he said in a low tone. "A man can't be as poor as I have been, and dream as much, without shrinking at the thought of charity, or—or ridicule."

He suddenly put his hand for a moment across his eyes. She saw that it was very thin and that it shook.

"So you thought I meant—that," she said slowly. She knew, with her latent love of ridicule, that was exactly what she had meant, but that he should have divined it angered her, in view of her later meditations, with herself. To assume the misunderstood, the slighted art enthusiast, was her best defense, for she did not mean to lose his exceptional beauty and talent



and personal charm until they should have afforded her the full measure of her calculations. "If you thought I only went to your studio to laugh, why did you come to see me today?"

For a moment he looked at her startled. Why, indeed? He had not put the question to himself. His breath quickened, the blood rose in his face as her eyes held him, and with a bound, as it were, the Italian in him was uppermost, the Englishman submerged. He leaned forward and laid his hand upon a fold of her floating dress.

"Because I wished to see you again more than I have ever wished to see a woman," he said. "I did not know it until this moment, but I know it now—"

For an instant more he bent near her, then rose abruptly and went to the window, looking out with unseeing eyes. What a traitor he had become! He hated himself. What madness was it that possessed him?

When he turned again he saw that she had risen also and stood near him, a faint, triumphant smile upon her red mouth.

But she chose to ignore what he had said as she earnestly laid her hand for a moment upon his arm. "I am glad you did come, so that you can understand me a little better," she said. "When I went to your studio yesterday I did not know you or your work. I was bored, tired, ready to mock most things, including myself. Perhaps at first I hurt you. The knowledge of why I had been brought there, as though to offer you in charity work the result of which I should not prize, wounded you. I saw that and I tried to make it otherwise.

"Afterward as I watched you and saw the beauty and inspiration of your art I feared it must be you who mocked. I felt uncomfortably like some mannerless intruder whom you had courteously shown her error. If you had not come today I should have written you begging you to do my portrait on any conditions."

What need has a woman for beauty when she has tact? What need for accomplishments when her flattery like a

silken web knows how to spin itself about the very point of vulnerability?

To Trevis no praise could have been more sweet, no homage more exquisite. And his wild words of a moment ago—mad, unconsidered words that he of all men had no right to say—would be forgotten.

He raised the hand upon his arm to his lips.

"You make me more grateful than I can say," he answered. "As for the portrait, I wished to paint it almost as soon as I looked at you, yet in the same moment I had a strong, unreasoning feeling that I could not accept anything for it at your hands. I do not know why it is," he went on almost impatiently. "I cannot understand it, for I should gladly accept commissions for other portraits. I only know that it is so, and I beg you to let me have my way. I could not paint it as I have dreamed it if it were otherwise; it would lose the ideal—the intangible—"

He broke off, hopeless of putting what he felt into words, and conscious that without words—she understood.

She considered a moment, her finger on her lip, then looked up.

"It shall be as you say," she answered; "only, since I am to be so greatly your debtor, you must let me have the portrait placed in next season's Salon. It will be well hung, and certainly bring you much notice if sent in my name."

It seemed to him as though she read his inmost desires almost before they were formulated, and once more an impulse rose which it took all his strength to subdue.

He touched her hand again as he murmured something incoherent, and bowing, went out into the everyday brightness and clamor of the streets. They seemed to him as unreal visions of another life, and his step was slow and curiously groping.

#### IV

It was four o'clock by the brass hands of the ponderous old clock in

Trevis's studio and the artist himself, a half-smoked cigarette between his fingers, stood near the open window re-reading for the tenth time a note from Maria Valencia to say that she was bringing some friends that afternoon to look at his pictures. The studio in an hour's time on the strength of this communication had assumed an unwonted holiday air. His best pictures were placed in a good light; a rug borrowed from an acquaintance across the street decorated the floor; the table, cleared of its artist's paraphernalia, bore a wine bottle, some glasses, and a plate of cakes from the *patissier* nearby. Lastly, with a touch of pathos of which he was unaware, he had bought a sheaf of white narcissus on the *quai* and placed it in a bowl of brown pottery.

As he stood musing a voice singing lightly made itself heard outside, approaching through the garden—a vibrant, throaty voice, with a curious break in it, reciting an old rhyme:

... "*Ma chandelle est morte,  
Je n'ai plus de feu.  
Ouvre moi ta porte,  
Pour l'amour de Dieu!*"

There was a light tap at the door, which opened to admit a young girl as he turned hastily. In one hand she held a tiny bouquet of fresh Parma violets, such as one buys from the flower women for four sous. Her little black cape and hat were very shabby. Her face in its Greek outline, its rich rose coloring, was repeated and idealized in many of the canvases on the white wall above her head.

She was a little breathless as she came up to him and slipped her slender brown hand caressingly through his arm with the assured affection of confidence.

"I came to see what new dream is making you forget me for so long," she said, looking up into his face with a smile which, even under its assumption of cheerfulness, was a little tremulous and wistful. "You had not come for a week; so as I passed I thought I would see if you were well—if you needed me."

She held up her violets in a child-

like way, then as her eye wandered to the bouquet on the table a look of startled inquiry sprang into her face.

Trevis, watching her, answered her look with a forced smile.

"Mrs. Van Vleet's portrait is done, Therese," he said, dropping her hand and going to turn a picture more to the light. "She is coming today with a party of friends to look at some of these." He swept his hand toward the studies with which the walls were lined.

The girl's face brightened.

"Oh, that is good!" she said in her odd, dark voice. "Perhaps your fortune is made now, Michael, and we can be happy, so happy"—she raised her arms and clasped them behind her head with a gesture of ecstasy—"as we've dreamed of being, Michael—as we've dreamed of being!"

For a moment Trevis looked down at her with an expression that was untranslatable. On his face there were tenderness and pain. In the same breath he seemed about to draw her to him and to recoil from her.

But she, unseeing, pursued the trend of her suddenly reawakened hopes.

"Now that you've actually made an opening and people are interested enough to come, they are sure to recognize your genius. Think of it, Michael, think of it; not in two years nor a year, perhaps, but now, now, today!"

She unlocked her arms, and going to the table bent over the narcissus there, inhaling its sweetness in a breath that was half a laugh, half a sob.

"The little house seems very near now, Michael," she said in a low tone. "Where you are going to paint the most wonderful pictures in the world. There are to be roses everywhere and a river nearby. The walls of one room are to be painted from floor to ceiling by you, and we are to ride horseback together every day at dawn in the summertime. Have you forgotten?"

As she spoke she had drawn nearer to him, and now with her flushed face raised to his she stood within the circle of his arm, watching him with a frank

and naive adoration which knew no concealment. In her eyes the shadow of melancholy was drowned in the sunlight of her smile.

Trevis bent his lips to her hair.

"Forgotten, Therese! What an idea! One does not forget one's whole plan of existence so soon. But I have been absorbed in my work lately; you must see how it is—"

She slipped away from him, still smiling.

"Yes, I know, I know. Really, my only thought was that you might be ill—that was why I came."

She laid her violets on the table, adjusted her faded hat and cape, and then with a child's smile, a child's roguishness, she spread out a fold of her shabby skirt for inspection.

"Always black, always mended," she said, with a little sigh that was not all assumed. "Do you know, Michael, the dream of my life is to have a rose-colored dress. I suppose these people who are coming here will be very grand. And that reminds me," she concluded reflectively, "you said two weeks ago that Madame Van Vleet was to bring the Contessa dei Valencia here. Did she come?"

Trevis, who had turned away, stood with his back to her, looking out of the window.

He did not turn round.

"Yes, she came," he answered, and his voice sounded constrained. Then after a little silence he said abruptly:

"I am to paint her portrait."

The girl, who was standing by the table, moved suddenly and looked at him, a startled, vaguely troubled look.

"I am glad," she said slowly, yet unaccountably some of the radiance had gone from her face. She trifled with the things on the table, picking them up and putting them down nervously; then finally, "Is she very beautiful, Michael?"

That inevitable question, which since the beginning of time has instantly welled irresistibly to the lips of out-rivalled women.

Trevis turned at the question and came toward her. The blood had re-

ceded a little from his face, and his eyes as they met hers were not quite frank.

"I had not thought about it," he said with a tinge of impatience as he glanced up at the clock face with its rapidly advancing hour, "but I should not say she is particularly beautiful. She is much too pale and thin."

He laid a hand on the door, and Therese in silence took up her violets and followed him. It seemed to her, as he spoke, that he looked at her as though from a great distance. For an instant an impalpable abyss seemed to have opened between them.

From the garden without at that moment there came a sound of light footsteps, the faint rustle of silks, a laugh like a chime of golden bells shaken suddenly. An imperious hand tapped lightly upon the panels of the door.

The man started and his face lighted, then grew dark, and to the girl watching him that look was a sword. Without a word he opened the door and stood holding the knob in his hand. Maria Valencia with several ladies and gentlemen came a little forward, then stopped in surprise, while her haughty eyes traveled over the face and figure of the girl in the doorway.

Trevis, standing annoyed and conscious of being at a disadvantage at her side, advanced with what grace he could summon.

"Contessa, may I venture to make known to you the original of several of my pictures which you were good enough to admire?" he said.

But the girl beside him did not advance; rather, as her stricken gaze took in the brilliant personality before her, the sarcastic smiling eyes, the raised eyeglass, which in that hand was a weapon keen as a stiletto, she shrank further back into the shadow of the doorway in her old mended dress and shabby hat.

There was a man standing among the little group of friends whom the Contessa had brought with her, whose eyes since they first rested on the face of Therese had never left it. He came forward and proffered a smiling request as Madame Valencia with a murmur



of vague greeting to the girl was about to enter the studio. She was obliged to present him.

"To Mr. Trevis's protégée," she said, with a little silken laugh which but gave fresh point to the sting of the insinuation. Then in a lower tone she added:

"Always connoisseur, my dear Prince," and with a little undulating, caressing movement, took her gray-gloved hand from the girl's arm, where it had lain with every appearance of amity as she made the introduction, and entering the studio with the others began to adjust the violets at her waist before a tiny mirror on the wall.

Prince Murad Bey Kalama had among others two particular enthusiasms to which he devoted an enormous amount of time, energy and money. These were pictures and beautiful women. In his house in the Rue de Ponthieu was a long gallery in which were destined to be placed fifty full length portraits of the fifty most beautiful women of his day, each one to be signed by some famous master of portraiture. In the gallery were already forty-nine such portraits, whose wondrous faces looked down in imperishable beauty from the painted walls; while now, at forty years of age, Murad Bey, who had visited all countries, spoke a dozen languages and was known as one of the greatest and wealthiest art critics and collectors in Europe, was searching for that one perfect face which, surpassing all others in his great gallery, should be its crowning glory, its apex. Yet, as the picture was to be the last, he could not make up his mind to select any of the various beauties daily in review before him; and while disappointed feminine aspirants complained that only an immortal angel descending from Heaven could fill the vacant panel, the wits of the boulevards hinted that Kalama's gallery was a distinct advance on the harems of his forefathers in point of domestic peace and felicity.

Murad Bey, Prince of Kalama, was the son of a deceased Turkish diplomat of note who had married an Albanian

woman. Though Turkish in name and appearance, he was in all other respects, and most specifically in religion, a thorough cosmopolite and citizen of the world. He drank wine; he shrugged at fast and feast day alike; he preferred to live in Paris at all times, yet—barbarous, almost sinister—under the veneer of super-Western civilization the Mussulman lay dormant. He owned a house in Constantinople, a summer pavilion on the Bosphorus and the gray castle of Kalama, a granite pile, half palace, half fortress, set among the remotest mountain fastnesses of Albania. He was a tall man, heavy, though tigerish of figure, his dark hair grizzling on the temples.

As the eyes of the Prince rested at this moment on the startled face of Therese with an admiration he did not trouble to conceal, a smile and a whisper went about among the little group of gay people who were mounting the studio steps.

Trevis, to put an end to the situation, was about to go to the girl and conduct her to the gate, when to his annoyance he saw Murad Bey, who had been assailing her with his deft blending of compliment and question, offer his arm with exaggerated deference and lead her toward the entrance in defiance of all courtesy, a defiance which he never hesitated to assume when it pleased him.

In the studio the invaders had disposed themselves in expectation of cakes and wine, and Maria Valencia, standing before the easel where the vague outlines of a new picture were just indicated on a fresh canvas, called to him to come and be presented to her friends.

"Have you been painting long, Mr. Trevis?" asked the young Baronne d'Avray, with an oblique glance at the piled and dusty canvases in a corner of the room.

Trevis turned to her with his grave smile.

"Since I was a child, madame," he said; "my father, and later Ackroyd, the portrait painter, were my first teachers. Poverty and ambition have

been the taskmasters under whom I have worked of late years. I think they teach one the most."

He left her side and went to take the empty wine glass from the Contessa's impatient hand. She detained him with a gesture as he bent over her.

"Will you dine with me tonight?" she said, and for a moment the fringe of her lashes was lifted and he gazed deep into the imperious clear eyes. "Madame d'Avray is coming, Mrs. Van Vleet, of course, Prince Murad Bey, and a great American illustrator whom you will like to talk with. We can arrange about the sittings for my portrait too. You will come?"

Trevis leaned toward her. "Yes," he said slowly, "I will come." He was about to add something more when Simone d'Avray, her pale turquoise-colored eyes alight with curiosity and amusement, fluttered up, a large piece of cake in her hand.

"*Mon Dieu*, Mr. Trevis," she began at once in her high, clear, impertinent voice, the voice of a woman who has always had her own way and danced through life as lightly as a butterfly over a sunlit field, "your wine and your cakes are so good that we are forgetting your pictures! As Prince Murad Bey, the critic *par excellence*, has deserted us to bear off your lovely model, we must e'en limp along in our own unintelligent way without him, naïvely admiring the pictures which we really like, but which we are liable, later, to learn with pain are mere nothings of blue, green or purple paint, as the case may be, while before those great masterpieces vibrating with genius and technique, which we should have beheld in breathless wonder, we are found crying shrilly, '*That thing!*'"

She broke off out of breath, while her hearers laughed outright with enjoyment. "Some of us are most unstudied where art is concerned," she resumed after a moment, consuming the remaining fragments of her cake with unabated relish, "so if you catch us admiring the wrong thing

merely pity us gently and don't mention it to anyone."

She whirled round and surveyed the room. "Where can Murad Bey have gone?" she questioned. "He is the rudest man in Europe, he doesn't care what he does, or even what he says very much, and yet we are all so eager to invite him to dinner. I heard a great bore, who thinks himself a wit, say the other day that Murad Bey is a man of great executive ability. I told him that great executive ability, after all, is merely the capacity for making other people do things."

As the Contessa applauded with soft palms, the garden door of the studio opened behind them and the heavy form and dark, sardonic face of the Prince himself appeared on the threshold.

"I beg a thousand pardons," he said, his glance including both Trevis and Madame Valencia. "I crave your indulgence for a distracted collector—"

He broke off and turned pointedly to the Baronne. "I thought I heard someone taking my name in vain just now," he observed. "Don't keep me in the dark."

Madame d'Avray's small nose went into the air. She did not like Kalama.

"Oh," she said carelessly, "I was just observing in a general way that all men are fools."

Kalama bowed to the ground.

"Yes, madame," he said suavely, "but all fools are not men."

Maria Valencia with a little shriek of dismay put both hands over her ears.

"Oh, oh, this slaughter is too horrible! I cannot stay to listen. Come, come, Mr. Trevis, and show us your pictures—"

She made her escape, drawing Trevis in her train, while he, all trace of annoyance and dissatisfaction with himself gone, found himself consumed with laughter as he left the combatants on the field. He felt half intoxicated with the charm of this hour, the familiar intercourse with these people

whose world had hitherto always seemed so far away, the gaiety and frankness, the brilliance yet simplicity, the atmosphere of careless culture, the ease, the *aplomb*, the wealth, the merriment. To his starved senses and ambitions it was a wonder world from which he never wished to awake.

As they gathered about the easel or strayed from picture to picture along the walls he heard nothing but a chorus of praise. It was not even polite praise, for occasionally someone would pick a fault for a chance to be witty, and this only made him the more certain of his ground.

Maria Valencia, seated by the open window, with a portfolio of sketches before her, sought out Kalama across the room and beckoned him to her side.

"Always connoisseur," she said, holding a sketch in both hands at arm's length as though absorbed in its effect. "The shabbier the hat and gown the more beautiful and virtuous the lovely heroine. One always finds it like that in romance, and there seems to be no exception to the rule in Mr. Trevis's charming model. You remind me of a bee prince hovering over a rose garden in miserable uncertainty as to which flower he shall select."

Kalama smiled.

"You always seemed convinced that I have a dangerous sting concealed somewhere about my person," he said; "whereas, upon my honor, madame, I carry no concealed weapons either actual or moral. I am a misunderstood man, and besides," he ended, bending to look into her face, "since you refused to grace my poor gallery, what flower in the shape of woman could console me for the loss, or, being Venus herself, could look half so fair as the beauty which is unattainable?"

"Ah, that truism as old as man himself," said the Contessa, laying down her sketch, "that man always wants most what he cannot get. Yet, after all, the cause of my refusal is not so far to seek. I dislike mixed company. Why should my portrait hang between an actress on the one side and a *contadina*

on the other merely because they happen to be beautiful?"

Kalama's face lighted suddenly with the eagerness of the enthusiast.

"Because," he said quickly, "beauty has no caste. In the same way genius has no sex and both are beyond the trammels of mere position or convention. They are triumphant, God-given things that constitute a patent of nobility in themselves, and united they can command the world."

He paused and his habitual sardonic look replaced the glow of interest in his eyes.

"After all, madame," he concluded with a spice of malice, "if you are so exclusive there are even duchesses in my collection beside whom you might hang if you pleased."

"Perhaps it is not that at all," said the Contessa reflectively. "Perhaps it is only that I crave the distinction of being the only woman original enough to refuse the coveted celebrity of a place in your gallery. Yet who knows? Possibly if Mr. Trevis is more kind to the subtleties of my pallor and irregularity than another the picture might go to you. Who knows?"

As she rose Murad Bey stood aside to let her pass, a keen and malicious smile flashing for an instant across his face.

"You would make me very happy, madame," he said; "the more so, since Mr. Trevis's lovely model has just refused to so honor me."

## V

THE room was narrow and low and mean. High up under the rusty eaves of an old house in Montmartre, its only outlook was onto a sea of roofs and of crooked, teeming streets.

Twilight was filtering in now, touching the iron bed, the bare floor, the pots of mignonette and geranium on the sill and the pale face of Therese as she sat alone.

From beneath her came the noise, the indescribable throb of life of a street in Montmartre in the month of May:

the cries of children playing and quarreling in the gutter; the voices of the evening paper sellers as they ran along the asphalt, calling their wares in a curious deep, muffled monotone; the clangor of a church bell near at hand; the twittering and squabbling of innumerable sparrows; the shrill call of a cheese vender, long drawn, piercing: "*Fromage—fromage à la crème!*" the musical pipes of the *vitrier*; and over and above all the deep, ceaseless hum of immeasurable traffic.

The girl was seated before the open window, her arms crossed on the broad sill and her chin resting upon them. Above, a pale, pearly paring of moon had come out in the darkening blue, and its faint light silvered her upturned face.

In the reflection her straight, delicate features, the warm rose of her mouth, the luster of her heavy chestnut hair, the size and setting of her hazel eyes, took on the ethereality of some dream face. As yet immature, with the wand-like and gracious immaturity of seventeen, her face and form gave promise of an extraordinary beauty. Already she had had many offers to pose from artists in the Quarter, but only two or three had succeeded in transferring her lovely head to their canvases.

Among these was Trevis, whom she had met in the studio of a fellow artist more than a year ago during the latter days of his struggle for artistic recognition. She was sixteen then, and the incarnation, the very essence of spring. He found that she lived alone in one room in Montmartre, earning her meager living by fine embroidering for the great shops, with an occasional pose for some artist.

Gradually, in their ensuing friendship and love, he broke down the barrier of a singular reserve, and learned the little there was to know. The girl, strangely enough for one who was practically a waif of the streets, was intensely proud, yet without a spark of personal vanity. He found in her a dignity of feeling which sat strangely upon her youth, a whiteness of mind and soul which were as though a pale,

exquisite blossom had thrust itself bravely through the mud and slime of the squalid, teeming Quarter.

For her every early recollection was like a taint. She remembered dimly a tawdrily furnished apartment and a coarsely handsome woman, whom she was not allowed to call mother. Then, while impression was still faint, the whole vanished from her horizon and she found herself among strangers in a strange tenement where a woman, harsh of voice and rough of hand, sent her forth in the morning with flowers and laces to sell and in the evening hours exacted a swift and unquestioning toil on fine embroideries of cob-web whiteness.

As an outcome of an unaccounted-for strain of gentle blood in her, an innate, untutored refinement of thought and speech, she was disliked when she was not pursued, and at last one day in hot revolt she took her basket of flowers in her hand and going down into the tumult of the streets was swallowed up by them, and, so far as that phase of her existence was concerned, forever.

She went to the Butte Montmartre, chaffered with a hard-eyed, suspicious *concierge* for a little, solitary room under the eaves and obtained work for herself.

She was known as Therese. She had no other name. For her the past was an ache. The future held no possibilities which her hands might grasp. Then Trevis had come with the warmth, the ardor, of his wooing and she awoke, it seemed almost with timidity, to happiness, to the daily thought of their life together which was an ecstasy and a balm.

Yet at this moment, as she sat looking up into the blue, the events of the day were heavy upon her. She felt conscious of a vague foreboding, a dull and formless sense of alarm, which were like leaden weights upon her heart.

When she had heard from Trevis of his order from the American woman and of his meeting with the Contessa dei Valencia the future seemed to become suddenly a certainty. . . And now



she remembered his constrained voice, his strange reserve, his remote, altered gaze upon her. . . The day had begun so brightly, she could not yet understand why this later hour seemed so lonely and so dark.

She was startled from her musings by a step on the stair, a tap on her door. When she opened it Trevis stood there, and for an instant, in his conventional evening dress and long, loose coat, she did not recognize him. She had never seen him otherwise than in his old gray tweeds or his daubed painting coat, his dusky hair confused by a nervous and impatient hand upon his brow.

For the moment he seemed very far away, a stranger.

He stood before her ill at ease. A week ago she would have been all eagerness over his appearance, his destination—gaily sure of her right to criticize the one and to demand the other. Now her very silence piqued him into speech.

"Madame Valencia has asked me to dine with her tonight," he said hastily. "There is an American artist she wants me to meet. She is very kind."

The words were bald, awkward, unlike his usual manner, and the girl looking at him felt stir within her the birth of a strange new pain. And with it awoke a terrible, almost a savage desire to touch his hand, to feel his lips bend again to hers with the passion of that first caress which was all her past and all her future. Against the force of her own pride, her own wounded sense, her hand stole out and twined about his, her head drooping against his arm.

It was on the impulse that he meant in all honesty to renounce his mad dreams that he bent to answer the girl's caress, with vague murmured words of affection, which she answered with the transient brightness of a beaten flower which a compassionate hand raises toward the sun. She clung to him as he kissed her good-bye, then stood trembling and alone listening to the echo of his footstep dying on the stair. When even the echo was gone

she groped her way back to her seat in the darkness and for a long time remained there motionless.

She was feverishly happy again, a false happiness which she pressed to an aching heart, seeing the truth unacknowledged and terrible beneath her restless joy.

When the pale little moon sank in the west she was still there with her head pillowed on one arm, her face peaceful in the repose of sleep, and one relaxing hand still grasped a small silver locket which Trevis had hung about her throat.

In the hotel in the Avenue de l'Alma Maria dei Valencia sat at her flower-strewn dinner table with Michael Trevis on her right hand, and her siren's eyes smiled into his over the red wine in her lifted glass.

## VI

"PESSIMISM, my dear Mr. Trevis, is merely a form of mental indigestion."

Maria Valencia, ensconced in the high-backed chair in Trevis's studio, lifted her smiling eyes and regarded him provokingly as he stood at his easel working upon the glistening pale primrose-colored gauzes thrown about her shoulders.

He laughed a little ruefully as he took up another brush.

"I have suffered from it as I have just told you," he answered. "Perhaps, madame, as you have so cleverly diagnosed the malady you are physician enough to cure it."

His sitter lowered her lashes and her provocative smile deepened.

"I think I could," she said deliberately, "for one who had entire faith in me."

Trevis raised his eyes and looked at her, a look he thought she did not see.

To him in this bare sun-flooded room of his the magic of her voice and presence was poignantly sweet. More sweet even than in her own surroundings.

The outside world with its every tie

and affection was becoming a thing apart and far removed from him. Reality, even life itself, was embodied only in this ineffable siren face, which to his gaze voiced more compellingly day by day the eternal allurements.

He roused himself abruptly at her glance upon him, endeavoring to speak lightly.

"Then you will heal me magically," he answered. "I was growing bitter and despairing when you came and gave me faith in myself as an artist, as a human creature—who might—dare to live."

He stopped abruptly and took up his brushes again. Through the opened windows the sunlight drifted across the floor, broken into showers of dancing flecks as the soft wind stirred the trees outside. The room was very still. The scent of white lilacs was heavy on the air.

Maria Valencia leaned back in her chair with half-closed eyes.

She felt that same thrill, warm as wine and exquisitely exhilarating, which surged through her veins whenever life became real and vibrating and full of interest and possibility. It was so very often for her like a crimson sapful flower whose leaves she loved to pluck off lingeringly one by one.

She felt like a sorcerer who with a magic word has evoked a winged shape from the dust of earth and with a wave of his hand has called into subjection mighty and resisting forces.

It was her tenth sitting in Michael Trevis's studio, and for the first time she had been able to break down his stubborn resolve to put the thought of her from him and remain true to the love and faith which Therese had given him. Now with bitter self-contempt, yet with the feverish joy of yielding, he knew himself weak. The magnetic glance of the woman before him drew his eyes, broke down his resolutions, swamped his reason.

Yet although she felt the rising of this passion in him like the first faint heat of the sirocco and breathed deeply because of the sense of power and passionate possibility which it aroused in

her, she was far from any thought of love. Rather, as though it were some drama, she wished to see what he would do, hear what he would say—hold his heart in her hands.

She rose suddenly and shook the enveloping gauzes from her shoulders.

"I am tired," she said, and came to stand beside him at the easel.

Although he would not look at her, Trevis was keenly aware of her nearness. A cascade of lace upon her dress floated out and touched him as she moved, while the perfume of it seemed to envelop and caress him. A slight flush rose in his dark face.

The Contessa leaned lightly forward to inspect the portrait already beginning to live, and after she had examined it for a moment, turned her head and looked at him.

"You are not only painting me," she said, "but you are painting an idealized being whom no artist has ever seen before and who I am afraid does not exist at all."

Her face was quickened with triumph. She felt that she would have her desire.

Trevis gazed at her almost dully as she stood beside him. She noticed that his hands were clenched hard at his sides, and a desire that was still stronger even than mere vanity took hold upon her, the desire for power over anything human. She turned slowly and stretched out a hand for her hat and gloves which lay near her on the table, but before she could reach them the man, stirred to a moment's madness by her proximity, threw out his arm and caught her to him.

He had felt and recognized her willful allurements, and the force of her desire mingling with his own had broken down all barriers and even filled him with a passionate belief that she loved him in return.

For a moment she lay quiescent, thrown back against his shoulder, her slim throat seeming to invite his lips, then with a swift, lithe movement she withdrew from his touch.

She knew that the thought of that exquisite unfulfilled moment would chain

him as with gyves, and she moved away in silence, believing he would pursue her with protestations. But he did not. Startled at last by the stillness in the room she turned and looked at him.

He had sunk down trembling into the chair by the table and his face was hidden on his arm. She hesitated a moment, then returned to his side, and as he raised his head at her approach she saw that though his eyes burned his look was grave and still.

"You are stronger than I," he said slowly, almost wonderingly. Then as he rose and looked down at her, "I love you," he said; "forgive me—I love you!"

She put out her hand and laid it for a moment in his, touched and awed even in spite of herself. Then she turned to the door.

"Don't come with me; don't say any more," she flung incoherently, "but let me go now. Perhaps I also; I do not know, yet."

She broke off and before he could answer was gone. He heard her light footstep on the flagged walk, the sound of the closing gate.

For a long time he stood quite still where she had left him. Then with a sudden, weary, beaten movement he flung himself face downward on the threadbare couch.

He knew himself a traitor to all that was true in him, and as the madness receded from his brain he scourged himself with the thought that he had betrayed to no avail. Though he should sacrifice himself and love and the heart which had faith in him, would that brilliant woman who had just left him ever stoop for more than a moment to his obscurity? Would she, who held the best of life in her careless hands, ever give her future to him?

Perhaps even now she was laughing—laughing! Perhaps even now some other lover claimed her thoughts—the right to hold her slender body in his arms.

## VII

"But how can you refuse? It is unbelievable that a woman in your po-

sition should refuse such an offer. It would make you famous; and in return I would surround you with everything that you were created to enjoy."

Murad Bey, standing against the light of the little window between the narrow walls of Therese's attic room, seemed in very truth to shut out the light of heaven itself from her and to cast a shadow over her fair face as she sat looking up at him.

Since he had been old enough to desire anything he had never realized the possibility of not obtaining it. Usually he found that he could buy it, and when he could not the lawless and predatory blood of his Albanian mother rose in him and he took his desire as the leopard takes its kill, by right of might.

"You, Therese, are today the most beautiful woman in Paris. In a year or two with the proper surroundings you would easily be the most beautiful woman in Europe, but without those surroundings, lacking the wealth and influence and protection which I can give you, you will never be anything but a handsome model buried in a garret in Montmartre, known only to a few artists, and by them, on account of your value as a model, kept carefully from the knowledge of others. Perhaps—"

His look faltered an instant, then the note of the habitual cynic sounded dominant.

"Perhaps, mademoiselle, the queen of a tinsel and ever changing court. Who knows? These things come when the years dim our ideals, and then all women are alike. Besides"—his voice and eyes grew keen as the gambler's when he plays his highest card—"will you let it be said that Michael Trevis amused himself with you?"

He paused abruptly on the question. He thought he knew, if not human, at least woman nature.

With a low cry like that of some helpless animal suddenly wounded the girl sprang up and confronted her tormentor, and as she did so her hand instinctively went to the little silver

locket at her throat and held it close as though its touch comforted her.

She felt afraid and her body trembled. This man made her feeble bulwarks seem very small and frail. He was an Oriental cloaked under all his Western civilization with that mystery and silence of the East which no Western mind has ever been quite able to penetrate or to grasp. She felt afraid, as of some intangible thing which had enmeshed her and would crush her when it chose. A relentless hand seemed to close about her throat.

But she looked Kalama in the face.

"If a man had insulted you like that," she said, "you would have answered his insult with a blow. But I am only a woman—"

She spread out her hands with a little contemptuous gesture more eloquent than words, and turning deliberately away with a still pride which would not let him see either her fear or her hurt, leaned against the window.

Murad Bey was not sensitive. He chose to ignore her words and look, and coming closer to her stood looking down upon her.

"Are you a woman," he said at length harshly, "and yet can forego so brilliant a revenge? You must be aware that were you actually plain of face my notice would give you a *cachet* of beauty. Handsome as you are, my offer to place your portrait as the last in a collection known and talked of everywhere will make you celebrated. It will bring you the attention of kings and the intimacies of their satellites. Can't you understand that obscurity, even though it possess genius, is nearly always helpless, while mediocrity in a brilliant setting can impress and command? Can't you realize what you might become with opportunity in your grasp? Your life, if you will let it be so, will be like a fairy tale of the East. Therese, you cannot refuse!"

He paused on the tense thrill of the girl's voice raised in answer.

"It does not matter to me what you say," she flung with the desperate courage of the hard driven. "Your proposals are insults and you dare them

because of this—" She glanced about the old attic and down at her shabby dress.

"No doubt"—her voice fluttered a little as she went to the door and held it open—"no doubt, you thought me like so many others. Perhaps, monsieur, self-respect is a foolish thing. I do not know; I feel as though I were blind and could not find the way any more."

Her look and tone were piteous, and as she stood quivering, waiting for him to go, a sullen, unwilling respect crept for the first time into the frowning eyes of her hearer and almost usurped for an instant the solely physical admiration with which he hitherto had regarded her.

For the moment he was moved, beaten, and with a muttered farewell he left her standing there.

It seemed to Therese that she would never be again free from the intolerable ache that rose and throbbed in throat and breast.

Of what use were the endless strivings of mankind for good or evil? Of what use her own?

Mere pebbles they seemed, disturbing for an instant the waters of a bottomless pool. A mere breath upon the great mirror which reflects for an instant our distorted little lives as they pass before it.

## VIII

"HAVE you heard," said Murad Bey, sitting Turkish fashion under a large tree, "that the Duc de Vallona arrived in Paris yesterday?"

Simone d'Avray, lost in the cavernous depths of a huge basketwork chair, sat up suddenly and opened her blue eyes very wide.

"Not really? Then I suppose she has decided. Is he coming here to-day?"

"I asked him at the eleventh hour, but he had a business engagement he could not break. He looked very disappointed when I told him that Madame Valencia was to be of the party."



The Baronne raised her sunshade to ward off an impudent sunbeam, shook an entangled twig from the black and white ruffles of her mull gown and leaned back again somnolently. "Of course there will be wedding bells. Maria is certainly a wonderful woman to get through one husband, annex his fortune and live half a lifetime of excitement by the time she is twenty-seven, and then be asked to become a duchess. She has without doubt the faculty of having things happen to her. I wonder what she means to do with this dazzlingly handsome Trevis person—"

She paused and Kalama laughed.

"Madame must be amused," he said. "She delights in analysis and sensation, and besides, the fellow is really going to make something of her portrait. She made me ask him here today."

He paused as some servants approached through the wood and began to lay a table placed nearby.

They were in the forest of St. Germain not far from the Chapeau d'Or, a restaurant where Murad Bey had ordered luncheon to be served under the trees to his guests.

So far only the Baronne had put in an appearance, and lamenting her punctuality was impatiently awaiting the rest of the party. At length the approach of voices and laughter through the mossy aisles of the forest announced their arrival, and presently Madame Valencia, in a dress of soft yellowish laces with a knot of vivid scarlet flowers in her broad white hat, came into view, with Michael Trevis walking beside her; and following them Mrs. Van Vleet and the elderly D'Avray, who was interested in fungi and regarded his wife with the benevolent interest of a St. Bernard viewing the gambols of a kitten.

There was also a young American girl with whom Mrs. Van Vleet was about to return to Newport; and following her a very blond and taciturn Englishman whose motto apparently was, "Whither thou goest, I will go." Lastly, there was De Marcheville, Frenchman, novelist and butterfly; and

an American artist and illustrator—poised as it were for immediate flight to any known, or preferably unknown, point of earth.

Simone d'Avray, without otherwise moving, put up a turquoise-studded lorgnon which her piercing, forget-me-not-colored eyes did not need and raised a dubious eyebrow with all that impenetrable impudence which the Faubourg St. Germain considers its prerogative outside of its own realm.

"Quite a menagerie, Prince, with you and Maria as trainers," she said calmly.

Kalama chuckled a little as he rose to receive his guests. As they took their places about the table there was a little murmur of pleasure, for the lace cloth was almost hidden by the fresh violets with which it was strewn, while in the center on a miniature lake floated a large white swan made of forced tuberoses whose fragrance was blown headily about by the light spring wind.

Maria Valencia sat on her host's right hand, her airy jests and the bright rapier play of her wit flashing out to her gay laughter amusing even to Kalama's critical ear and taste, and to Michael Trevis, who watched her at a little distance with eyes which wore the suffused look of one who dreams waking—bewilderingly incomparable.

He had not seen her alone since that moment a week ago when he had held her in his arms and tasted the honeyed bitterness of a love such as women like Maria Valencia alone know how to arouse; and for the sake of which, while worshiping the pure and the ideal in their hearts, men will yet sell their souls and go down to the very gates of perdition.

Trevis, his memories of the heart-broken clinging of Therese's arms stifled and obliterated; had gone to Maria Valencia's house ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of a smile, a caress. He was received and found himself in the midst of a gay party about to start for Versailles to drink tea with some English people whom they were to meet on the terrace.

He was not asked to join them and left with a burning heart.

How could she laugh so gaily if she cared? How could she look at him so carelessly and fully if she had ever trembled and vibrated under the mere thought of his caress?

This commonplace meeting before others, this necessity to seem indifferent, to play a part, smote him with a sense of unreality, of dread. Yet the pressure of her hand at parting, the sweet, secret meaning of her glance, filled him with fresh hope, fresh madness.

He wrote to her, a letter whose outpourings he re-read almost with a sense of personal amazement. Her answer the next day was her presence in his studio for a sitting, accompanied by Mrs. Van Vleet, with whom she was going on afterward to some afternoon party.

He felt a sense of dull despair at her lightness, her elusiveness, until lingering for a moment at parting she put her unloved hand for a moment into his.

"I had your letter," she said, "the day after Murad Bey's breakfast at St. Germain. I shall be alone and at home to you at five o'clock. Come to me then."

Her fingers lingered upon his for a moment, and their touch was a caress, a promise.

Now, as the guest of Murad Bey, he sat in silence while the gay tide of talk at the table flowed on about him.

"*Le five o'clock, le flirt, la dernière nouveauté*—that is Paris," said De Marcheville. He had been invited there to talk and he knew it. "Art and ideals are the dream of France; her reality is a sordid mixture of art jargon and journalism, of war and muddy politics, of empty heroics about morality and reform."

"They make at least an effective background for the frivolities of the *haute gomme*, who should in reality only exist to be the leaders of all that is best in France whether of art or literature, politics or morality. These spoiled worldlings cannot understand that aristocracy's only excuse lies in

its obligations of example and leadership."

"Hence, anarchy," said Kalama. "Russia knows something about that. And what did France care before the Reign of Terror for the divine privilege of aristocracy to uplift and better humanity? There was Versailles and the Pompadour and her kind. What indeed does wealth, which is becoming the world's only aristocracy, care today for the sufferings of mankind? Now and then a philanthropist goes down to the multitude to live its life and give to it his wealth; and for this he must hold himself ready to share the portion of the Man of Sorrows. Others more worldly-wise build a library or endow a hospital and then order out their yacht for a cruise. They know very well that the library or the hospital is like a pebble thrown into the Atlantic. Man can never really aid man by applying a thin salve of extraneous charity. The real millennium will only come from within each man's heart working outward."

"We sound like a reform league on manners and morals, do we not, Mr. Trevis?" said Madame d'Avray gaily to the artist, noting that he sat silent near her.

He assented, but somewhat vaguely, for he felt a sudden strange tightness at his throat. He had an instant vision of Therese, her beauty withering in a forlorn starved struggle with life, wasting herself in a barren effort to retain a self-respect which seemed to earn neither appreciation nor reward, tasting the ashes of righteousness, with temptation many-voiced and alluring stretching a thousand hands to drag her down. Yet stanch because of her faith in him, her love, eating a crust hopefully with some wistful thought for him and of the life together which he had promised her. And he sat here the patronized guest of the man who had tried to tempt and ruin her, the slave of the woman who affected to despise her!

For a moment he hated himself, he hated the gay artificial world of these

people, he hated the sorceress whose eyes ever and again sought and held his with smiling promise.

He lifted his wineglass hastily, feeling Simone d'Avray's gay, supercilious gaze upon him, but his throat seemed to contract, the sudden trembling of his hand spilled the amber wine upon the cloth and he set it down untasted.

*He, to eat of Kalama's bread!*

The American artist Telfair, who sat opposite him, noticed his agitation and leaned forward to address him, thinking to distract his thoughts and put him at ease. Telfair was a tall, big-boned man with a jaw like the sweep of a ship's prow, and kindly, nondescript eyes which under their kindliness saw a great deal.

"Don't you think it's a great pity, Mr. Trevis," he said, "that the cleverest minds in France, not only in art, but in literature, should put themselves to such base uses, to pander to base and degenerate tastes that are fast gaining a foothold? The comic papers of Paris! The shop windows of the boulevards! Clever! Yes, brilliantly clever, I grant you, but hideously degenerate."

His face flushed a little, as though this were a sore subject, and he forgot that he was talking merely to divert attention from the agitation and *gaucherie* of a fellow artist. He went on quickly.

"With the drama it is the same; with literature, ah! The multitude crowns its poets and thinkers with laurel, but it is the books of Gyp and of Marcel Prévost that are sold in their thousands on the boulevards."

His words were taken up in the silken tones of Maria Valencia. She had marked Trevis's gaze upon her and had noted his agitation. She chose to cover both.

"I often wonder," she said slowly, looking at Telfair as she spoke, "if mere talent does not oftener succeed than genius. Who has not seen the profound thinker out-talked, out-ranked in some drawing-room controversy by a mere witty boulevardier

incapable of real depth, yet whose mere surface brilliancy dazzles and charms?"

"A great statue or a great picture is created for the few. The caricaturist who sends all Paris into convulsions or achieves an international cartoon so outrageous that its sale is stopped upon the boulevards, that people may have it surreptitiously for five francs a copy, is far more likely to make a fortune. In these days one should be a fad, a sensation of the hour, a *nouveauté* of the most novel, to make one of those ephemeral, startling and gilded successes which we see so constantly. Mr. Trevis," she turned to him with her gracious gesture, "you should paint a *ballerina* whose gauze skirts would be a marvel of realism. The musician who composes a little song that takes becomes a millionaire, while his classic-ridden brethren of the craft starve in garrets. If you be a pianist, a violinist or an actor, wear your hair in a startling way, carry a muff or a pet panther, cultivate strange eccentricities in clothes and lap dogs and above all refuse to be interviewed, and your fortune is made. The ancient Greeks may have worshiped art with a capital A, but we moderns worship *chic* with an equally gigantic C, and *cachet* is everything." She stopped, laughing and out of breath, while a little salvo of applause broke out from her hearers.

Murad Bey, hanging upon her words, tore the carnation from his buttonhole and, as they all rose from the table, cast it before her with a laugh.

"Bravo, madame," he said, his heavy brow lifted and lightened with entertainment. "Your logic, your epigrams, your wit, have made my little breakfast an oasis in the desert of life's banalities. What have I done that the gods should consider me worthy? As for you, De Marcheville"—he turned to the writer as they all stood about with their little cups of Turkish coffee in their hands—"since when has the golden butterfly turned Socialist?"

De Marcheville shrugged.

"Since I began to perceive the su-

periority of the aristocracy of brains and heart, talent and artistic success, over that of mere birth or money," he said carelessly.

Maria Valencia turned to Trevis, who was at her side.

"That is true," she said softly; "the only aristocracy is the aristocracy of individuality, of personality, of genius."

He looked at her mutely. He thought with those words that she loved him, that she meant to stoop from her heights to put her hand in his and follow him, if need be, into poverty and obscurity. His heart was too full for speech.

At that moment the sound of a horse in full gallop smote sharply on their ears. Presently they could see the animal, a big roan, passing along the road to the Chapeau d'Or through the forest, and almost at once a man in riding dress appeared under the trees and came toward them. Murad Bey went to meet him with outstretched hands.

"My dear Vallona, this is charming of you," he said. "What a pity you could not join us at breakfast. Will you have coffee or a liqueur?" Hospitably intent, he turned to give an order to a servant while the newcomer advanced, passing an airy greeting with those he knew.

Trevis observed him idly as he stood talking for a moment to Madame d'Avray. He was a tall man, extremely slight, with a look of incredible arrogance and breeding and weariness. He looked as though to an inferior he would consider it almost too great an effort to condescend to voice the command which was the dominant note of his whole presence. His smile was pleasant, his present attitude particularly unassuming, yet he looked the epitome of that aristocracy of birth which Maria Valencia had just disavowed.

He came to her and raised her hand to his lips.

Trevis was standing at her side, but the newcomer apparently did not perceive him.

Only for a second's secret observa-

tion he looked him up and down with a curious mingling of eagerness, disdain and apprehension.

Then with apparent indifference he turned on his heel, drew the Contessa's hand through his arm and strolled with her a little apart under the green and arching trees.

## IX

"Yes," said Trevis moodily, almost impatiently, "the portrait is almost done except the eyes and mouth and a few touches to the drapery. Madame Valencia is anxious to have it finished before she leaves Paris for the summer. Why do you ask, Therese?"

He turned and looked down almost resentfully at the girl beside him.

It was the day after Murad Bey's luncheon party at St. Germain and Trevis, in a fever of uncertainty and impatience, had allowed himself to be led off by Therese for a little excursion down the river as far as St. Cloud. She had divined the fever in him without knowing its immediate cause and had tried to allay it with her timid suggestion of a boat trip down the Seine and what bright and cheerful talk she could muster.

He had gone with her almost gratefully in the early forenoon, knowing that he could return long before five o'clock should usher him into Maria dei Valencia's presence. He felt that he could not remain alone. He could not paint—he could not read—his mind seemed on fire.

He stood with Therese leaning on the railing of one of the little river *bateaux*, and gliding almost imperceptibly down the winding emerald strip of water toward St. Cloud, between green and flower-starred banks, on whose sedgy margins blossom-laden trees bent to reflect themselves in the water's wind-ruffled surface, or silvery willows stooped to dip their slender, finger-like leaves into the cool ripples.

Paris lay behind them in the broad, yellow sunlight, splashed with the feathery shadows of its trees; a blur of



white buildings and glittering roofs. A gilded dome rose here and there, and in the nearer foreground the Eiffel Tower clove the misty turquoise of the sky like a dark arrow. The girl had brightened as she always did in Trevis's presence, her youth responding to his proximity, the May day, the thought of the hours to be spent together in the country.

But the man, as he leaned silently by her side, looking down into the water cut by the prow of the boat with a sound like rustling silk, was conscious only of his own weakness, his own treachery. He believed that Maria Valencia would listen to him; yet apart from Therese's love for him he knew, beneath all sophistries, that his social position, compared with that of Maria, Contessa dei Valencia, made his passion for her almost grotesque. His financial situation in proximity to hers was a barrier, which to the Anglo-Saxon in him rendered it only the more shameful to speak. People would say that her place and her wealth had turned his head. Perhaps they even now were saying it with a laugh, while he, artist and dreamer, oblivious of the practicalities of life, lived immersed in splendid visions of future greatness in his art, of a mad flight into some sun-steeped, barbaric country with the woman he loved, where under the stimulus of passion he would paint such pictures as men only dream of, and they would be alone, for long hours of vibrating delight, of absolute possession, each of the other.

Yet when this moment of self-surrender should come, this giving of body and soul into the keeping of another, what should he say to the girl at his side? How look into her clear eyes, which had never faltered nor drooped before any gaze but his, and say: "I have lied to you. I do not love you. I mean to leave you"?

What would she say or do when she found that her kingdom of life had passed into the hands of another? Involuntarily a thought of the river at

nightfall came upon him and he shuddered.

He did not know that to such as Therese the river is more merciful than men.

The boat had reached the landing stage at St. Cloud with much churning of water and straining of ropes, and the people, for the most part the humblest dwellers in the great capital and its environs, were pressing about the tiny gate where the *conducteur*, in wooden *sabots* and faded blue uniform, stood collecting their *jetons* into his little black bag.

Trevis with the girl beside him went up the narrow roadway, and as it was midday, sought out an unpretentious restaurant, where they sat down to bread, sour wine and water, and *pommes de terre frites*, with some slices of *saucisson d'Arles* as an added luxury.

It was the midday meal of the French worker, of the artisan, who is not found in the sacred precincts of the Rue de la Paix and the Boulevard des Italiens; whose eating and drinking cost but a few sous a day, who loves to go with his wife and children to the Bois on Sunday afternoons, or to view the races at Auteuil from a distance, while he picnics on the grass; who, beneath all the glitter and froth and folly of Paris, is the backbone of France and her hope.

Trevis ate his homely fare in silence. At the same hour, on the day before, he had been the guest of Prince Kalama, at a flower-strewn table where every delicacy that a culinary genius could devise had been served, and the cold, sparkling wines had been neither sour nor watered.

His gaze went to Therese and his heart smote him. For the first time he noticed her visible and pathetic attempt to brighten up her old black frock with a knot of her favorite rose-color at her throat and a little lace about her wrists. Yet the effort only seemed to make more evident the poverty of the shabby black dress, and one could imagine the trembling eagerness with which she had arrayed herself in her poor best for this little holiday outing at St. Cloud, ignorant of yesterday's

banquet with its perfectly dressed, butterfly women and their inimitable air of luxury and smartness.

When they had finished their meal they wandered into the town, where there was a fair going on, and for a while forgot everything but the childish joy of the moment. They looked at a peep show together, passed witticisms with the showman and threw balls into the giant's mouth. Finally Trevis, who happened to be a marksman of extraordinary accomplishment and not averse to either feminine or popular applause, turned his back to the shooting gallery and holding a small mirror in his hand, by shooting over his shoulder broke all the glass balls within his vision.

Then, covered with glory and prizes, which they distributed to gaping urchins, they wandered away to sit until boat time under a tree by the water's edge.

But once alone, the dark yet intangible cloud which both recoiled from touching either by word or deed, fell between them again and with it that silence which was becoming so terrible.

It was almost a relief to the girl, although she yearned to be near him on any terms, when Trevis rose and led the way down to the little *ponton* where the return boat was just making its landing. When they reached the city again Therese had an errand to carry some fine embroidery to a house in the Avenue de la Tour Maubourg, and Trevis, pleading an appointment with a picture dealer, prepared to go back to his own studio for half an hour.

As he stood on the sidewalk holding Therese's hand for an instant in his, she saw his gaze turn away and a look cross his face more eloquent than if he had cried the truth aloud in her ears. An open carriage driven rapidly passed close to them. In it, Maria dei Valencia was leaning back with lowered lids, holding a great bunch of cream-colored roses on her knee. Beside her sat the Duc de Vallona. For an instant her lids were raised and her gray-green eyes swept contemptuously over the shabby figure of Therese and coolly into

the face of the artist. Then they drooped again without further sign of recognition and the carriage passed swiftly down the sunlit street.

Maria Valencia meant to be a duchess, but she did not for all that mean to renounce the wine cup of intoxication. Michael Trevis with his beauty, his tragic madness of love for her, his genius and, from her pampered altitudes, picturesque Bohemianism, appealed more to her wild spirit than the cool boredom of such a man as Vallona.

Also, she felt an inexplicable, tigerish desire to hurt the girl with whom she had seen Trevis that afternoon. In her blood there was a strain of the people, the peasant people, from a not very far removed ancestor, the strain which in a Latin country will show itself in a swift dagger thrust from a jealous hand, or a sudden push on a cliff side in the night.

Polish by birth, to which she owed her Oriental-like duskiness and pallor, and with a French mother who had transmitted to her the magnetism which was like a Circe's spell, her marriage with a wealthy Italian had been a brief and, on her side at least, unromantic affair.

Love is rarely or never equal. There is always one who cares too much and bruises his own soul against the rock of another's indifference. It may manifest itself only in those small daily slights and forgetfulnesses, unmeant, perhaps, yet possible only where love is not, and which wound like tiny poisoned daggers driven deep into the heart. Valencia's love for his wife had been one of these silent, smiling tragedies. Perhaps at first she loved him—as much as her nature could ever allow her to love anyone. He had been a very rich man and charming with that charm of *savoir vivre* which the world lends to those who move much amid its greatest cities and its gayest scenes, and he had attracted her youth and love of pleasure and luxury. When he had fathomed her, although his affection for her remained unchanged to torture him with

the deep pride of a love set at naught, he effaced himself almost from her life. In three years he died.

A witty Frenchwoman once said that her definition of the sum of feminine happiness would be to have been born a rich widow. Maria dei Valencia in her twenty-eighth year, when scarce even a memory of the dead man ever obtruded itself upon her, often felt that her marriage had been a mere fleeting dream from which she awoke to all the good things of life. She had that freedom which only marriage and widowhood can give to an European woman, and besides she had riches and rank, youth and charm.

Michael Trevis, punctual to the chiming of the five o'clock bells in the clocks all over her house, awaited her in an upper room, but when the door opened he did not look up for a moment, so sharp and yet so sweet was the sense of her nearness.

"So you did not let the Sirens of the Seine keep you away after all," she said. "I almost fancied—" She broke off and spent a moment arranging with bent head the cluster of scarlet geraniums which lay like vivid flames against the dusky blue brocade of her dress.

Trevis stood watching her in the silence, his chest heaving like that of a man who had been running. She in her turn secretly observed him with a little thrill of admiration, yet it was less his actual beauty which attracted her than his suggestion of strength, a nervous strength, manifest in the clear cut line of lip and lean jaw; in the thin, muscular, brown hand; a passionate, vivid something which was flame-like and which ever and again broke through the Anglo-Saxon in him and made him all a Latin.

"*Mon ami*, I want you to do me a favor," she said softly. "It is a long way to the Rue d'Assas and the weather is growing warm. I want to have my portrait brought here and finished. You will do that for me?"

"What would I not do for you?" he answered suddenly and warmly, as

though in a moment the last barrier had broken away and he gloried in the freedom of speech. "You hold my very life in your hands. I think because of you I could be great. It needed only you to show me the way to such achievement as I had not even imagined before. Will you wait for me until I can prove myself before the world and make you proud of me, or will you go away with me to some lonely place and help me to be what I have dreamed?"

"This winter, if I succeed at all, we could go to Egypt or to Greece. You are rich, but if you love me you will leave it all, houses and jewels and title, and come away with me into poverty, until I can earn the right to say that your wealth was nothing to me, that it was you I wanted—you—only you. Will you come with me? I love you, I love you!"

He came close to her and laid his hand on hers, carried away on the lava flood of his own pleading and passion, his own magnificent daring and desire.

She did not resist him; she did not even answer, but she closed her eyes with a sense of voluptuous fascination as he drew her slowly into his arms and laid his lips on hers.

## X

To Therese, solitary in her stifling room under the sunny eaves of the teeming house in Montmartre, and to Trevis, sunk in the slough of a desperate and feverish allurements, the clear spring days of their early intimacy had passed forever.

As the girl noted his abstraction, his prolonged absences, his wild gaiety or moody brooding when with her, there seemed left only a vast desolation. Bitter tears often swelled painfully in her throat, yet they seldom wet her cheeks.

For already she knew the truth. Going to the studio one day with that irresistible desire to see and speak to Trevis which was at times a fevered and inordinate craving, she had found

the door ajar. Framed in the light and shadow of the long room, Trevis, his head bent in a gesture of exquisite tenderness, held Maria Valencia in the circle of his arm. They were laughing together, delicate laughter full of charm and intimacy. To the girl, who stood for an instant wide-eyed, motionless, that laughter seemed to strike in hammer beats upon her very soul.

Without a sound she turned and fled, her hands upon her ears to shut it out.

On a forenoon in early June, as she sat by the open window with some work in her hands, Trevis came up from the street with quick, determined steps. After a short greeting he stood irresolutely silent with a hand on the sill, looking out at the long silver threads of straight falling rain and the misty patches of blue between the gray clouds. On the fresh wind came a smell of damp earth and of new, wet leaves.

He was in a mood of boundless exultation such as the artistic temperament alone ever knows when swung Olympus high from the depths of a despair often as tragic as it is unreal.

The kisses of Maria Valencia seemed warm yet on his lips. On that day for almost the first time he had lost that sense of aloofness, of intangibility and uncertainty and insecurity as to the morrow which he always felt in her presence.

As she looked at him something stirred within the girl's patient heart like fire, something seemed suddenly to snap in her head with a discordant break like a violin string drawn too taut, and she rose wildly to her feet, her work scattering about the floor.

"Why do you come here?" she said harshly, and her strained voice held new, dark notes of tragic expression called forth by this moment of passion and stress. "Why do you come here? Is it out of pity, thinking each time to find courage to tell me it is the last? The end came long ago! Why are you here now? Were you waiting for *me* to give you the excuse and tell *you* to go?"

Her voice sank on the last word and

she leaned breathless against the wall behind her. Her serene, childlike faith was gone. She seemed in a moment to have become a woman. Although at seventeen summers the whole of youth lay before her, she would never be young again.

The man she arraigned stood before her, his arms hanging idly at his sides, his eyes upon the ground. He neither spoke nor moved; only a curious pallor settled lividly upon his lips and brow.

When she spoke again her voice was terrible and wonderful. It seemed to have gathered into itself all the passion and tragedy and reproach of the world. Its mere sound made the heart quiver like the dark plaint of a 'cello's vibrating string.

"I had given you a love that would have gone to the ends of the earth," she said. "A love that either in the body or the spirit would have followed you always. No time was too long to wait for your promises to be fulfilled; no poverty or obscurity was too great for me to have shared or endured for your sake. And in the end you leave me like this!"

She drew her breath with a dry, rending sound that shook all her slender body.

"You are like them all—like them all, do you hear—for ever and ever! Tell me, did there ever exist a man who could be satisfied with only one woman?"

On the question her terrible laughter broke out and filled the room.

Had she screamed aloud it could have been no more dreadful.

"One woman! *One* woman! And we plume ourselves always on being the only one. Why can't we accept it; why does it hurt so when it comes? Michael! Michael! Why have you done this to me? Why have you put this dreadful pain, this madness in my heart? It is like death! It stifles me and burns—oh, God!"

Her cry was indeed the cry of a creature hurt to the death.

She flung herself on her knees by the open window and dropped her head upon her arms against the wide sill,



her body shaken with the tearless gasping of her breath.

For a moment Trevis stood as many another man has stood, looking down at the wreck he had wrought. Then he bent over her.

"Therese, forgive me! Forgive me, if you can!"

She heard the closing of the door upon the heavy silence.

## XI

MARIA VALENCIA sat in the little blue room in her house in the Avenue de l'Alma, her arms behind her head and her feet tucked under her, Japanese fashion, on the couch. The day was warm and showery. She wore white mull in loose, foaming folds about her, her throat was bare, and she was taking her ease, meditating with a little smile that showed the tips of her teeth and made of her eyes only a narrow, jadelike gleam between the dark, curved lashes.

On an easel at a little distance from her stood the now almost finished portrait, which amply demonstrated that she had indeed been right in her estimate of the painter's talent and its capabilities under the spur and stress of passion. The dress in the picture was of deep iris blue, its delicate and transparent folds shot with dull gold threads which in places seemed to weigh the weblike fabric into clinging and heavy masses. About the shoulders was a foam of pale yellow gauze held in place by a cluster of jonquils at the white throat.

It was a daring arrangement of color, yet it brought out the dark, irregular, evanescent face with poignant effect.

She looked at it for a long time with an even more profound pleasure than her mirror could have afforded her, since here she saw even her defects spiritualized and knew that upon this flowerlike face time and life could leave no further mark.

"It is almost a pity—really, almost a pity," she mused. She withdrew

her hands and looked down at the rings on her fingers.

"I do not believe he has ever thought of my money at all," she meditated. "Certainly not in the way that most men think. What a mad dreamer! To dress in rags and go to Greece or Egypt with him! To live in poverty with him until he has painted his great picture which will mean fame and fortune! How truly indicative of the artistic temperament to think that I would do that. *I*, who mean to be Duchess of Vallona . . . And yet . . . his kisses are wonderful . . . like glowing poppies . . . Perhaps I do love him . . . But not enough—not enough! I want more power, more place . . . Vallona—ah, Vallona!"

She lowered her hands slowly over her head where she had reclapsed them, and let them rest for a moment, interlocked as they were, before her eyes. The Duke had come suddenly, almost unpleasantly, across her thoughts in clashing contrast to the eager, the vivid, the poetic passion with which she was dallying.

He was not a man with whom she could trifle. On the evening before he had asked her formally to marry him and she had accepted him.

The Duc de Vallona had come as near to being jealous of Michael Trevis as it was possible for a person of his wearied worldliness and arrogance to be of a man whose position and even existence he scarcely condescended to recognize.

Yet this feeling had irritated and excited him, and led him into an earlier declaration than he had intended. Yet the offer once made was to take or leave. He was not a wealthy man, but he was an intensely proud one, and not for fortune's sake, neither for love—which he was incapable of feeling deeply or for very long—would he allow any woman to make a fool of him.

It is only great love or mad passion which has no pride.

The woman who had promised to marry him for the sake of his great

name and its many privileges and precedencies knew that she could not mold him as she had others in her slender, relentless, curious hands.

Yet, strangely enough, since she had courted such a scene with curiosity and interest, she felt herself a little shaken when she thought of the inevitable words which she must say to Trevis. Plastic though he had seemed, she realized almost for the first time that there were possibilities of storm in his face . . . And he thought she loved him . . . He had held her in his arms . . .

She shrank a little at the thought of his fury and despair, with a curious, an inexplicable recoil.

## XII

It had been nearly a week, delayed to an eternity by her excuses of one sort or another, since Trevis had seen the woman he loved. In the interim, when in the memory of the clinging of her arms his jealous terror, his uncertainty of her was lulled to the proportions of a mere dream, he had had time to paint and plan until he already seemed to stand within his Garden of Delight.

Nothing definite was his as yet, save her caresses, a half-whispered word of passionate promise, but already the whole kingdom of his desire seemed in his grasp.

Mrs. Van Vleet's goodly cheque, it is true, was nearly gone in that charming May month of dreams, spent in back debts, in rare white flowers sent nearly every day to the Avenue de l'Alma, in one or two exquisite little breakfasts at Neuilly and St. Germain, eaten like stolen fruit in a morning's delightful and undiscovered intimacy.

It was also true that, with the exception of Murad Bey, who had sardonically refrained from speech of any kind, all that gay company who had sipped his tea, admired his pictures and deluged him with compliments and promises of future orders—like a shower of rose leaves, and as unsub-

stantial—had some time since spread their wings, without even the ceremony of a farewell, and departed like a flock of exotic birds.

Yet he believed in himself. He had the ability—he had demonstrated it; his critics had admitted it. Surely, then, he thought, he could not now long go unrecognized; surely the golden tide of fame and, above all, of fortune, could not now long delay as the price of his talent and his long starved waiting. Already he seemed to stand with the woman he loved in that land of Egypt that it was the desire of his soul to see. Already he seemed to behold the Nile, the green plains in which it was set, the Libyan Hills rising dream-like, clothed in ethereal tints, Cairo itself, like a jewel in the sun, and beyond all the desert, hot and golden by day, by night like the dark blue lotus, the lustrous stars resting upon the infinite distance of its horizon.

He had longed for it all his life. Now with the first frosts of autumn he believed that he should go there with Maria Valencia at his side, and the joy of it turned him weak and dizzy.

On an afternoon in mid-June he left his studio and turned toward the Avenue de l'Alma. For Paris, the day was unseasonable in its languid heat, and there was a promise of storm in the warm wind which stirred fitfully from time to time. The young leaves drooped against the metallic blue of the sky.

Unaccountably a mood of intense depression was upon him. The thought of Therese haunted and reproached him, while a vague uneasiness and apprehension pursued him like a shadow. He had seldom thought of the girl in these days of almost hypnotic obsession and joy. When he did he thrust the thought away guiltily and in haste. He had not seen her; he had not sought to do so, but with a half-fierce self-contempt for the pitiful salve he had sent her some flowers and a few little delicacies such as he knew she sometimes longed for.

When he reached his destination he was shown into the upper room where

stood the portrait, and still beside it the table with palette, brushes, knives and colors, with which he had done his final work. As he waited, he stood before the easel with a thrill of renewed confidence in his own power. With what siren sweetness and allurements, tenfold intensified from the real, the pale, subtle, ethereal face was portrayed! How gaily the gray-green eyes smiled under their inky lashes! The colorless, flowerlike skin had the velvety bloom and texture of life, the dark plaits of hair its gloss and softness. It was the portrait of a woman, painted as only a great talent and a divine madness could have painted it.

Upon his musings Madame Valencia broke, cool of voice and gesture and in a plain white dress. She carried a large white fan in her hands and from her wrist depended a small embroidered bag. For the moment, as though with intention to yield to his plea, all her accustomed elegance had been dropped. To Trevis she suddenly looked like a young girl, simple of garb and manner, her dusky hair coiled smoothly on her white neck, her eyes tender in their appeal.

In a swift, irrevocable moment of tragic prescience, he knew that to pass out of her life would mean death.

She was startled when she saw his sudden pallor and felt his hot fingers on her own, and drawing away, went to the open window where above the tree-tops gathering clouds were visible and an occasional puff of hot wind stirred the curtains now and then.

Trevis followed her dumbly.

"This heat really grows stifling," she said, with a lightness that nevertheless held a forced note. "Everyone has gone away and Paris is a desert. I have stayed on for your sake, Michael, but now—" She paused, and he, coming nearer to her, laid his arm about her shoulders and looked down into her face.

"And now?" he said. "Ah, my dear, don't let me only hope any longer; let me be sure—sure that you will come with me in a month or two. Let me be sure—now."

She raised her hands and put them against his breast. She was pushing him from her. He realized it with a sudden sense of deathly cold, of emptiness.

"Now!" she said, under her breath. "Now it is time to say—good-bye."

He dropped his arm dully from about her and looked at her, and for a moment she shrank from his eyes. "Good-bye?" he echoed, slowly, gropingly. "I do not understand. You and I cannot say good-bye. I do not understand."

She looked at him for a moment irresolutely, then swiftly her scalpel cut wide and deep. "I leave Paris," she said, "in a day or two, and the coming winter I shall spend in Rome, where my marriage to the Duc de Val-lona will take place."

She spoke very gently, and as quietly she opened her broad white fan, and sinking into a low chair examined with solicitude the knot of pale roses on her breast.

But Trevis stood before her like a man turned to stone.

For one instant he was conscious only of his nails pressing into the palms of his clenched hands, of the singing in his ears, the mist before his eyes.

When it cleared he forced his stiff lips into speech.

"Your marriage! Your marriage!" he was stammering clumsily, grateful that she did not look at him as he spoke. "But you let me love you—you let me believe—"

He paused, as for a fleeting instant her glance rested upon him. It was as though the solid ground beneath his feet shifted and moved.

With a word, a wave of her hand, she seemed to have made of all her tacit promises and avowals, of all the precious days together, of all the dream-haunted nights, even of those very kisses they had shared, a mere cruel pastime—a mockery. Only an instant before she had stood within his arms and every fiber of his being seemed rooted in hers. Now the Sphinx itself was not further away,

more unreadable or more indifferent to his weal or woe.

With an effort he mastered himself and stood erect before her. It was his hour of fire, but he met it like a man.

The Anglo-Saxon had risen paramount.

"I wish you much happiness, madame," he said briefly, with an irony and formality that chilled and defeated her. He would have added a word of farewell, but voice and courage alike failed him. He bowed in silence and turned toward the door.

For a brief instant disappointment and resentment narrowed her eyes, then she rose and approaching him called him softly back.

"Pardon, an instant; there is a little matter—" She had opened the tiny silken bag dependent from her wrist and taken from it a roll of bank-notes which she held out to him. "I should have mailed you a cheque for the portrait, perhaps, but with so much on my poor mind, I crave your indulgence for the omission. You artists are always so impractical"—she smiled faintly, her siren's smile—"that I really believe you would never have remembered that I owed you anything."

And now indeed she had gone too far, had tortured the tamed beast once too often with her silken whip.

Trevis turned and his glance measured her, and as he looked the knotted cord which had seemed bound about his temples parted, and the cool, English blood in him was overwhelmed, blotted out, by a surge of fury which caught and shook him with the savagery of some fierce unchained thing.

With a bound he reached the easel near which she stood, and caught up a palette knife which lay there.

"You shall owe me nothing—nothing!" His voice rose for a moment on a high, tense note. With a savage sound like an animal, he raised the knife above the portrait, but the woman, rigid until then with fear for herself, divined on the instant his impulse and was beside him with a single lithe movement, grasping his uplifted wrist

with both her hands. A moment they stood so, eye to eye, imperious will clashing against blind fury, then, triumphant, she felt the relaxing muscles under her grasp and Trevis's arm fell to his side. But her gain withered under the cold scorn of his look.

Momentarily calm now, with eyes that burned strangely in his white face, he bent and taking up the notes dropped upon the floor, he tore them deliberately across and again across and let the pieces flutter from his fingers to the ground.

An instant Trevis lingered, looking about the familiar place, then approaching her he laid his hand upon her roughly and bent his lips to hers in a kiss at once cold and passionate, brutal yet infinitely despairing.

A moment more, and he had left her and gone out alone into the storm-swept streets.

### XIII

It seemed as though half the countries of the world had contributed to the crowd in this long, brilliantly lighted room with its great green felt-covered table, spotted with scattered cards and the moving hands of the men who threw down their money and gathered up their gains.

They were many and varied, these men, drifted from the East and the West to the flame of the great city, and by a common impulse of necessity, recklessness or love of hazard drawn about this table to stake and win, to stake and lose, on the turn of a card.

Here a swarthy Levantine, still, watchful, dissolute, measured the *croupier* with unfathomable Oriental eyes; there a restless Portuguese, his dark, mercurial blood mounting passionately, took his losses hotly and struck a clenched hand among the cards. A fair-haired youth leaned idly against the wall staring vacantly into space; a handsome Jew, with prominent, roving orbs, staked his gold over the shoulder of a white-faced older man—staked and won.

Leaning over the table, intent upon a play, with gaze fastened unwaveringly upon the notes which they had thrown down, were two men who for some time had held the attention of the room.

One was a Greek, supple, slender, catlike, known to the holder of the bank as a picture dealer, wealthy of himself and backed by the still finer criticism and richer patronage of a collector famous throughout Europe. He had shifting, brilliant eyes, set in a narrow, subtle face, ugly in repose but sparkling with intelligence.

The man facing him with flushed, drawn features and trembling hands upon which the cords stood out was Michael Trevis. His eyes were blood-shot and hot, his black hair hung tangled on his forehead. As he leaned half crouching over the table his tall figure and strong shoulders seemed to have shrunk into themselves.

It was more than two weeks since he had gone out from the presence of Maria Valencia into the underworld of Paris. At first with a mad determination to succeed at a bound, to show her and the skeptical, laughing, unattainable world that had used him for an hour's entertainment and amused itself by wrapping secret derision and covert insolence in a glittering garment of compliment and eager patronage, that he was not the fatuous fool that he must have seemed.

For weary hours he had dragged himself from picture dealer to picture dealer, from publisher to publisher, from agent to agent. At the dealers' all the pictures he had placed there were still unsold, some of them thrust back into dusty corners to make way for newer canvases. At the publishing houses, as though Fortune having begun to frown could not leave off, his drawings and pen sketches of a more ambitious nature than those by which he had sometimes eked out his scanty earnings were returned with thanks for the privilege of looking over them. He was told that they were already overstocked, or the needs of the paper demanded a different kind of work.

He took them in silence and going back to the studio flung them into a corner, and taking the little money he had, which should have gone for food, spent it in absinthe. He knew that the drawings were good.

The American woman whose patronage and interest had given fresh impetus to his dream of fame that had begun to grow dull with discouragement had returned to her own country, but he would not have applied to her had she been within his reach.

Finally, in a shop where he had placed some fans and painted satins, he was given fifty francs. Trevis took the money and held it in his hand for a moment, looking at it vaguely, then burst into laughter. He swung on his heel laughing, a jarring, reckless peal, and went out into the streets with a passionate, surging determination to drink his fill of the lowest consolations of the underworld, and then go out of life defiantly.

For the first time he felt that he also did not care.

It was a losing game, whose prizes nearly always came too late or when the capacity to enjoy them had long passed away.

He grew very reckless in those days and drank deep at the trough of beasts.

At length on the turn of a card he had staked his last fifty francs in this hot, luxurious, brilliantly lighted room.

He was scarcely interested in the result, though it was all that lay between himself and actual starvation. He felt hideously tired in mind and body—indifferent to life and its small daily demands, unable to resume the struggle for recognition now that all incentive for it was gone—nay, even for existence itself.

In the instant of suspense the Greek observed him narrowly, then the play was made, and the *croupier's* rake drew away the fifty franc note. Trevis turned from the table with a faint smile. He felt almost a sense of relief, as though the last barrier were down, as though an hour of release had struck.

But the Greek, with a furtive glance at the flushed face and shaking hands



of the artist, who followed slowly, pocketed his *rouleaux* of gold and passed silently and swiftly out of the room.

He had won.

In one of the upper rooms in his house in the Rue de Ponthieu Murad Bey was taking his ease after the fashion of his forefathers, into which he occasionally lapsed when the mask of super-Occidental civilization was off and the big bronze doors of the inner court were securely locked.

It was verging on midnight. He had the stem of a *narghile* in his hand, an ivory and gold tray with coffee, sweetmeats and sherbet at his side, and reclining on a broad divan, was alternately exhaling clouds of smoke and looking with half-closed eyes at a picture of a beautiful woman in the nude hanging on the opposite wall, a picture which only a French artist could have painted with its mingling of dreamy loveliness and voluptuous suggestion.

Upon his meditations a young Arab with a crimson sash about his slim waist and a red fez on his dark hair presently broke with a timid knock and a deep obeisance. He carried a folded paper which he delivered silently.

Kalama took it with a trace of excitement welling up through the somnolent calm of his expressionless Orientalism.

From the single Attic character in one corner of the paper he knew that it came from a certain Greek picture dealer with whom he had had recent conversation. It read:

The cards last night were auspicious for me alone; for him they meant ruin. For absinthe he has not another centime. He has quitted the bridges and, fifteen minutes ago, returned to his studio. I have obeyed your wishes as you have indicated, Excellency, in retarding the sale of the pictures placed with me and with my agents, and in keeping myself and Your Excellency informed of the movements of the object of your solicitude. But I have not the honor to be in Your Excellency's entire confidence, and may thus, on some points, unwittingly have erred.

Kalama, with a short, satisfied laugh, tore up the paper.

"In my confidence," he mused sar-

donically. "Does the man grow imbecile that he should expect it? Am I a child or an Englishman to trust other men? I know the secret patios of each man's life that crosses mine. I hold a thousand invisible threads in my hands, and at the end of each—a man thinks that he walks free."

He laughed again, and throwing down the stem of the *narghile*, sprang to his feet.

"It is time," he said slowly aloud, "to send the woman who loves him to the rescue of this shattered genius, this broken plaything of Maria Valencia. Allah!" he broke off with a fierce, deep exclamation. "Shall a woman set her will against mine?"

#### XIV

It was nearly midnight. Paris was still wrapped in the mantle of heavy heat which the recent storm had only half dispelled. A lethargy seemed to lie upon her streets and bridges; the vivacity of her teeming life was for the moment stilled. Even the stars looked faint and weary through the heat haze which throbbled before them.

The studio in the Rue d'Assas was dark and silent, and on the couch along the white wall Michael Trevis was stretched motionless, his head buried upon his outflung arms. In the stillness his breathing rose broken and feverish, like great sobs. Time after time a racking shudder shook him from head to foot, and from his lips dropped words incoherent with delirium.

Nemesis—a sternly just Nemesis—had come upon him. Two weeks ago he had left the house in the Avenue de l'Alma, unheeding the deluge which drenched him, and since then the bridges, the quays, the cafés and the gambling houses had made up the sum of existence for him.

Therese he had not seen since under the weight, the realization of a great retributive justice, he had been brought to suffer to the last heart-throb what she had suffered, and he shrank from her eyes.

He was utterly alone and very ill. In the twilight of this last day he had crept like a wounded and beaten animal back to the deserted studio, sodden, despairing, alone.

As he had entered, some earlier resolution, for days dormant in his brain, had stirred to momentary life and he had gone with blind, wavering steps to a cabinet on the wall and taken from one of its drawers a small revolver. But as he sank for an instant's repose upon the couch, in a relaxation of mind and body so complete that all will was for the moment destroyed, it slipped unnoticed from his hand.

As the clocks all over the city began to strike the hour there was a low knock on the door, which after an interval of silence was pushed open and Therese came gropingly forward, then stopped—listening. The heavy breathing reassured her somewhat after a moment, and moving forward again with the direct step of familiarity she lit the candles on the table and turned shrinking to the couch.

Trevis had half risen as the light flashed out, but the bright, sunken eyes which looked from his drawn face were unrecognizing and unresponsive. He did not know her, and with an incoherent murmur sank back to his former position. As he did so the revolver glinting upon the rug where it had fallen caught her gaze. For a second she stood quite still, her hand at her throat, her gaze set wide and piteous, then she went to kneel beside him, all thought of her own injuries merged in a great wave of love and protection and pity.

As she turned his face to hers and pushed back the roughened hair, he caught her wrists and held them in a cruel grasp, his eyes wild.

"Maria! Maria! Maria!"

It seemed as though the name and what it stood for filled his brain, his blood, his whole being. He put her hand to his lips, and for an instant was still, as though soothed; then he flung them away and his hoarse supplication was in her ears again:

"Maria! Maria! Maria!"

It was her reward.

She drew back from him and knelt there helpless, staring at him through the flickering, distorted shadows of the room, terrified, tearless and most terribly alone.

Of resource in this moment of calamity she realized there was none. Her own earnings, barely enough for the simplest needs, she knew could not withstand for a moment the drain of such a situation. Trevis himself, she knew, was penniless and bitterly ill in mind as well as in body. His pictures she might only sell after months of waiting, and for uncertain price. The American woman to whom alone she could have applied for aid was beyond her reach.

She put her hands to her forehead and leaned her head upon them wearily. What could she do? she wondered; how aid him back to life and health—how spare him humiliation—how place him again on the road to artistic success, with the will to achieve?

There seemed to her dazed mind only two hateful alternatives. To install him among the free patients of some charitable institution, or herself to become the model of the artists who continually solicited her. As she faced the latter alternative her whole body shrank in repulsion. Yet, should Trevis awake to charity, to a barren existence, bereft of all hope, all means or desire to succeed, all belief in God and mankind? Awaking thus, she knew that he would again endeavor to destroy himself, or should he chance to escape the fate of his own despairing hand, what hopelessness, what bitterness to endure, what struggle to be recommenced, with the vision of success turned old and gray and profitless!

Yet, on the other hand, must she herself awake in the studios of Paris?

There seemed no other way; yet to her clear eyes, inured to such surroundings though she had been, there was no tinsel bright enough, no sophistry so rarely turned as to hide from her the deformity of such an existence. At that moment she appraised her own

beauty as calmly as though it were a card in the great game of life, a high card which she held in her own hand, and she knew, should she enter upon such a path, all that the possession and use of it would bring—and withhold.

She was roused by a step upon the floor, a hand laid upon her shoulder, the clinging and caressing touch of whose strong fingers brought her back to the present with a shudder.

She dropped her own hands from her eyes and looked up quietly to meet the gaze of Murad Bey, bending forward to look into her face.

In the chiaroscuro he bulked as sinister, as forbidding as always, and in that shabby room tonight most incongruously in evening dress, his light coat thrown back, a flower in his buttonhole, the flush of wine upon his dark face.

As she shook off his touch, he straightened, and in doing so his foot struck the loaded revolver on the floor. With an exclamation he stooped for it, examined it deliberately, then taking out the cartridges laid it on the table.

"As bad as that?" he said under his breath, with a shrug, as he turned again toward the couch. "The eternal feminine was more thorough in her depredations this time than usual."

He drew a chair, and seating himself studied Trevis for a moment in silence—marked the bright fever in his face, the harsh, sunken lines which spelled the ruin of hitherto undimmed youth, and with an attentive ear listened to that unceasing call of unutterable loneliness and pain upon the name of the woman he had loved.

Then he aroused himself with a look of decision taken, and bent nearer to the girl, whose wide eyes studied his mood almost with terror.

"He cannot be left like this," he said briefly indicating the man, who with the failing breath in his tortured lungs was beginning to call for the water which his fever-parched mouth craved. "He may die in an hour or two without proper care. What are you going to do?"

She took Trevis's hand as it hung over the side of the couch in both her

own, slipping to her knees as she did so, her piteous gaze upon his face.

"I do not know," she said, faltering; "I do not know. We have no friends who could do anything—and even if I go to the studios it will be long before I can earn enough—"

Her tense courage was breaking. It seemed to her as she looked at him that Trevis was dying under her eyes.

Kalama hesitated only for a moment, his eyes upon her warm beauty as she knelt there—then he moved a little nearer.

"I can offer you something better than the studios," he said in a low tone, yet so distinctly that his voice seemed to vibrate to the furthest corners of the room. "Come to my house in the Rue de Ponthieu."

For a moment she held her breath, rigid in her place, then she turned slowly and looked at him.

"You will not help me—unpaid?" she said at length, and the question was a mere breath upon the air.

Kalama lifted his heavy shoulders as though he shook off an impression so vivid that it threatened to submerge his own desires.

"I dislike this man—this Trevis," he said harshly. "He is nothing to me; he is in my way! Why should I protect him?"

She turned again to look wearily upon the sick man.

Why, indeed?

She rose to her feet and went to the table. By it she sank into a chair and leaned her head upon her hands. In the circle of light cast by the candles she showed as exquisite as some wood nymph wandered afar from the vernal freshness of her forests to the black enmeshments of life and reality. She was very pale, her eyes dark with pain and fear, her young mouth in tense lines, her weighty hair falling upon her brow and neck in disorder.

Kalama followed her and stood before her, his gaze insistent and alive.

"For your sake—" he began.

She interrupted him with a gesture—a sudden, contemptuous gesture, full of strange dignity and decision that

usurped her softness and youth as by the flight of years.

Yet as she faced him with unflinching eyes and lips, her very flesh shrank in terror and loathing as she imagined herself alone with him and in his power.

"What is your bargain?" she said. "Tell me quickly—he is too ill to waste words."

She put her hands before her eyes and waited.

"My bargain?" The man laughed a little, a short, cynical laugh in which the worst in him seemed to rise satyr-like to the surface. "My bargain then—is this. Although you might make considerable money in the studios and—elsewhere—enough to buy back health for this man, yet you can never buy the influence which I can exert in his behalf if I choose. Bring him back to life though you may, if he wakes to find himself a penniless failure he will become a human derelict or—he will shoot himself. Also I tell you frankly, *ma chère*, that I have it in my power to hamper his artistic career very materially in many ways, and under certain conditions I shall not hesitate to do it.

"On the other hand, I can within the hour surround him with nurses and specialists—the best in Paris. I will order that nothing be spared that can contribute to his perfect recovery. When he is restored to health I will send an agent, who without using my name will buy some of his pictures at a good price. Upon these proceeds I will see that his doctors send him to the south of France where mind and body and even soul may find their Lethe. Afterward there will be much written and said about him, and through my influence he will receive many commissions for portraits. His pictures will be accepted and well hung, both in the London and Paris exhibitions; he shall have everything that money and influence can procure for him—materially—socially—artistically—to rouse his interest in life and art. Then, if he be capable of rising to any heights he will rise—he will paint great pictures, and the world will be before him.

"In return—"

He paused and she lifted her blanched face from the shelter of her hands and looked at him straightly.

"Yes," she said in a quiet voice, "I understand. In return, you demand—"

"You," he answered tersely, softly; and there fell a silence which seemed to vibrate with the thousand meanings of all that the single word implied.

She sat upright looking at him. There was no red in her cheek; her eyes fixed on his did not waver.

Physically he was a brave man, yet within him something that was not physical stirred with a strange awe of her that was almost fear.

When she spoke again it was in a new voice, a voice so cold and weary that it sat strangely upon her youth, as though snow had fallen in June and lay thick upon a rose garden.

"How do I know that you will fulfill all these promises?" she said briefly, as though words passed her lips with difficulty, and she would have them over. "Promises are so easy. Why, even he—"

Her glance turned to the couch for a moment, but her throat seemed to contract as she would have continued, and pressing her locked hands hard together she was resolutely still.

Kalama shrugged his shoulders again as he stood watching her, then turning to the table, drew a cheque book from his pocket and took up a pen which lay there.

"You have to choose between this man's death, the rough life of the studios of Paris—or my protection," he said deliberately. "It is not my habit, *ma belle*, to leave my debts of honor—or even of dishonor—unpaid. I need not give you more than my promise, to take or leave as you please, but since I care too much, I will place myself to a certain extent in your hands."

He bent over the table, wrote for a moment, then straightening up, he held out to her what he had written.

As she took it into her hand and looked at it, she saw that it was a cheque for a startlingly large amount,

made payable in a month's time. He spoke quickly.

"The amount I have set down there is too large for even my wealth to forfeit. If by the date on which it is made payable you are not convinced of my good faith, you have only to cash it. But I will not fail, for though he die or prosper, then, Therese—what can it matter—to us?"

With a quick movement he approached her, laid his hand upon her arm, his lips upon a tress of her hair.

Under the caress she was still, then mechanically, without raising her eyes, she spoke.

"Fulfill your bargain, Prince Kalama," she said, "and I—I will fulfill mine; only, waste no time. It may be too late."

With a sudden bitter sob that was half a cry, the outraged soul in her, as the words were uttered, seemed to spring up and battle for a moment against the terrible calm with which she had hitherto curbed it.

Trevis no longer loved her. To do this thing could wrong no living being but herself, and would aid him to the greatness which he had craved; yet her soul and body cried out against it, as those of Beatrice must have cried as from the scaffold she looked back upon the fair earth she was leaving.

Yet even Beatrice had had the consolation of death and stainlessness.

She—Therese—could have neither. She knew that did the man for whose body and soul she was about to sacrifice her own ever divine it he would rather die than for a moment accept such bounty. But she did not mean that he should know it.

Approached by unknown agents, it was impossible that he should suspect any source other than, in the natural irony of events, his good fortune; and since, though she had become nothing in his life, she yet loved him with an affection that was both wistful and mighty, it seemed to her that the only way to live at all might be in paying for him the price of ultimate success.

Self-respect might mean a certain righteous peace of mind and the

grudging privilege of living straightly in bitter solitude in a world which neither knew nor cared of her existence and its poverties. Yet to fling into the scale for his benefit in this hour of his most desperate need her unwanted and unrecognized existence, seemed to her more divinely just—more truly to have loved . . .

Fate had marked a path for her feet, where at the crossroads honor and rectitude for her must mean the death, the moral defeat of the man she loved more dearly than herself.

Would she have loved him, would she have been more pure or more deserving of respect, if she had left him to die or to fight alone, while she retained the barren honor which the world had hitherto accorded her?

She thought not.

Yet, had he still loved her, she knew that she would never have made the sacrifice.

Even so, for an instant, her heart would have its way; for the parting of this moment was indeed a parting of their paths forevermore.

She knelt down by the unconscious man, her face contracted with pain, and laid her cold cheek to his.

A moment she remained so, silent and rigid, then she rose to her feet as one become suddenly blind, and groping her way to the table, took up the scarf she had thrown there, winding it about her head and shoulders.

"I am ready," she said. "Let us go—"

At the door she released herself from the hand which drew her away, and turning for a brief instant, looked back. All her soul was in that look gazing out of her tortured eyes.

Then very softly the door was closed upon her, shutting her out into the night.

## XV

THE late afternoon sunlight lay hot upon the waters of the Bosphorus, and the ruffled surface quivered under its touch, now and again flashing into a swordlike play of blue flame.



High up, on the Turkish coast, overlooking not only the shining waters but its own sloping gardens, the darkness of the ilex groves, was a graceful structure, snow white in the sunlight, with domed, gilded roofs, and a wilderness of yellow and crimson blossoms entwining the black marble pillars of its balconies.

Upon the highest of these terraces, in the palpitating light and color of the Eastern afternoon, a woman was standing. Her arm clasped the stone pillar beside her, her cheek resting against it while she looked out across the waters with a strained pitiful gaze.

Behind her, an almond-eyed slave girl, with red sullen lips, was curled upon a rug, idly touching the strings of a lute which lay across her knees. Near her an armful of yellow roses was thrown down upon the floor of black marble whose cool darkness relieved the eye fatigued by the blue dazzle of the outside world, and at a little distance a heap of cushions still retained the imprint of her body.

The woman herself, gazing so stirringly before her, with the look of a creature newly trapped, seemed tall against the dark pillar upon which she leaned, the more so perhaps from the shadowy slightness of her form and the long white draperies in which she was clothed. The heavy chestnut hair was drawn away from her face and piled high upon her head. About her waist was a girdle of topazes and on her breast and hands jewels which gleamed with dull fire as she moved.

She hated these jewels put upon her like a badge of shame and servitude or a scarlet letter branded upon her bosom.

She was thinking how she would like to tear them off and fling them into the waters beneath her, and go free—though it were barefoot and with uncovered head. Yet, although the barred ways should open wide before her, she knew that she could never be free any more.

Nothing could make life what it once had been in the morning of her youth. Nothing could ever obliterate

suffering and regret and shame. Although riches and fame and liberty might lie within her hand on the morrow, they would have come too late.

Once she had dreamed of going hand in hand into the far places of the earth with one she loved. Now one spot had become like another, without interest and without hope.

What difference, she thought in her weary yet restless heart, could lie now between the dazzle of an Eastern seacoast or the twilight squalor of a Paris street, since love had gone?

She turned listlessly at length and looked down upon the girl crouching at her feet, who, speaking her own language, had been constantly with her in the four months since she had first looked out upon the Bosphorus and its far horizons.

"Atara, are you not very tired?" she said. "Do you not sometimes dream of the world beyond this balcony? Tell me."

The slave looked up, the lute slipping from her knees, a slow smile parting her full red lips.

"For us, there is no world beyond the gardens and the sea," she answered, stretching a lazy hand to draw a yellow rose toward her. "Why should you dream and fret, when you are young and beautiful and can lie in the sun among the roses, and sing, and eat sweetmeats, and"—her almond eyes opened suddenly—widely—"and be beloved?"

She spoke in French, with a round, liquid accent which imparted a drowsy, cooing note unknown to the vivid Gallic phrase on a French tongue. The woman looked at her, a little wistfully, a shade enviously.

"You are a pagan, Atara—but you are happy," she said. "The pagans of this world are always the happiest because neither their memories nor their dreams go further than the sunlit noon where they rejoice like butterflies in a rose garden. I almost envy you, Atara, who can be content with sweetmeats—and kisses."

On the last word she turned away with a gesture of loathing, and flung

herself down on the cushions, hiding her face upon her arms.

The slave girl, a lithe, swart Egyptian, desert-born and Cairo-bred, lacking utterly the submissiveness and somnolence of the Turkish woman, looked at the prostrate figure with an observant narrowing of her almond eyes.

"The great lord, the Prince Kalama, has tired of the Bosphorus and the rose gardens, but not of the jewels he has set in them," she said deliberately. "We shall soon return to Paris—the Lord Kalama and you—and I."

The woman to whom she spoke started up and looked at her.

"How do *you*—know that?" she asked quietly, pausing between the words as though they rent her. Atara the Egyptian lifted her lazy lashes and regarded her with a gleam of triumph.

"The Prince Kalama told me—in the night that is past," she said.

There was a long pause while the slave girl watched a cruel red flush, which she had never seen before, flow slowly across the face and throat of her companion. Then she took up her lute and struck a chord or two with watchful indifference.

The woman remained for a moment half risen where she was among the cushions. Life had been bitter before, but never so intolerable as in this second when for the first time she fully realized that she was as much a slave as the girl before her, who possessed equally with herself the power of pleasing for an instant a master's whim—and no more.

Kalama was in the habit of purchasing slaves; it was only the price which in her own case had differed from the gold paid to some Levantine trader.

She hesitated a moment, looking tensely before her, then suddenly with feverish, tearing fingers she unclasped the jewels from about her waist and throat, and gathering them in her hands in a glittering crimson and yellow mass, got to her feet and stood for

a moment looking down at them as they lay in her grasp. As she did so Murad Bey came out upon the balcony, and at sight of her stopped sharply, with a lowering brow, which yet did not conceal a gleam of anxiety, of apprehension—perhaps deep down, a flicker of admiration, of savage tenderness.

He went to her, and taking the stones from her flung them contemptuously down upon the cushions.

"Perhaps you grow difficult and would prefer diamonds," he said with a sneer.

She straightened at the words and looked into his eyes.

"I shall never wear jewels of yours again," she said in a low voice. "I loathe myself to think that I ever allowed your slaves to dress me in them at your command." She paused, and for an instant a strange, slight smile crossed her lips, a smile which filled his heart with futile rage, for through it he saw, looking with stern calm upon him, the soul which he could not reach and could not break, though he held in his grasp the body that inclosed it.

"I shall keep my bargain, most noble lord," she said at last, with a scorn which seared; "but I shall keep it in sackcloth. I shall never wear jewels of yours again."

For answer he bent with a dark look, and taking up the stones approached nearer to reclasp them about her.

She moved away from him and stood back, one arm thrown for support about the marble pillar of the balcony, her face very white and still. But he did not stop for that. A fury of dark rage had shaken him suddenly and he was in a mood to either break or kill her.

Yet upon his savage, thwarted temper, which at an instant's further hint of resistance would have broken without hesitation into a blow, her white rigidity was like a menace.

As he fastened the chains again around her throat and waist, she looked at him with eyes which suddenly seemed to gaze beyond him upon some pale mirage drifting vision-like across her inner sight.

"The north wind is cold—as cold as death," she said in a low, strange voice, "and the snow is falling like a white cataract down the face of the cliffs—the tall, gray cliffs—they seem to tower to the sky—and the sky is gray too—"

For a moment she stood looking straight before her with dilated eyes.

"Michael . . ." she cried out suddenly with a terrible, despairing note; and then again: "Michael!" and from her full height she fell face downward, prone upon the rose-strewn floor.

## XVI

"WILL madame see His Excellency for a few moments? He is waiting at the door."

The maid held out a card as she spoke.

La Belle Therese, before her dressing table, laid down the mirror in her hand, glanced at the name engraved upon the card, whose illustrious owner was shifting impatiently from one foot to another before her dressing room door, and shook her head.

"No," she said quietly, and with the same indifference she might have displayed had she been asked whether she would take lemon with her tea.

The maid laid the card upon the table and went back to the door.

"Madame cannot see Your Excellency," she said, opening it a few inches. "Madame regrets—"

"Give her these flowers, then," said a disappointed voice through the panels, "and this note."

A letter and an enormous bouquet made their appearance, thrust through the aperture. The maid took them, closed the door and laying the note before her mistress, busied herself in silently arranging the roses in a jar of water.

La Belle Therese took up the letter without comment and tore it into strips.

Then she resumed her mirror.

In the distance the last notes of an orchestral number and the faint sound of applause came through the closed door.

A heavy step sounded outside, the guarded portal was pushed unceremoniously open and Murad Bey entered. He was smoking, and his saturnine and dark features looked lowering.

Into the eyes of La Therese there came a strange look. She pushed back her chair and quickly rose to her feet.

For a moment Kalama stared at her gloomily and irresolutely with drawn brows, then he put his hand into his pocket and drew out a necklace of emeralds quite as carelessly as though it had been a string of peas.

"I brought you these," he said, still gloomily. "You will wear them to-night."

His tone was not so much a question as a command. He approached her and clasped the jewels on her neck.

She suffered him mutely. When he drew back to view the effect she shrugged her shoulders slightly, and turning away, drew down to her contemptuous face the tall roses in the jar on the table.

"Bah!" he said suddenly and fiercely. "It might as well be a string of glass beads."

"It is a string of glass beads," she answered, with somber eyes and lips that mocked.

She stood before him—attained, yet unattainable as the pole; for the soul of her escaped him always.

Tonight she had laid aside for the first time the black dress which a witty journalist had lately referred to as a piece of brilliant affectation.

The phrase had hurt and saddened her since it would have been impossible for her to explain that the poor black dress had been one of the mere outward impulses and demonstrations of pride—a pride to which her right was denied by society. There are feminine reservations, feminine shadings, which the male mind never quite grasps. Yet although she had put aside the somber black, the thin ivory-colored fabric in which she stood confronting Kalama was no less severe. Its lines were straight and unadorned. Only the turn of her throat was bared.

About her there was a look, white

and remote, which caught at the heart. The great emeralds on her breast accorded ill with her frail and spiritual aspect.

Kalama eyed her impatiently.

"You look tired, almost ill," he declared, with drawn brows. "You walk miles, you eat nothing—it is no wonder."

As he spoke, the shrill ringing of an electric bell sounded from the corridor. A call boy knocked at the door and voiced his nasal summons.

She started a little, as though returning down the road of long, long thoughts, and approaching her dressing table she raised her hands without haste as without fear, unclasped the necklace from about her throat and laid it in a box under the mirror.

Then, without a word, she turned away and went quietly out toward the stage.

## XVII

MORE than a year had passed, and the girl Therese, whom Murad Bey had desired and entrapped, had given place to a woman whose development even his critical judgment had not been able to foresee. Although his predictions in regard to her beauty had been more than realized, it was not this alone which impressed and dazzled. It was as though some hidden power had suddenly stirred within her, to manifest itself in a bearing so tragic, so scornful, yet so brilliant that it alternately fascinated and repelled.

Grief had bred in her a talent for its own expression.

In her hours of solitude and oppression during the first months of her life in Constantinople she had begun to sing to herself some old Provençal and Breton songs. Later, in the white pavilion on the Bosphorus, where she found herself practically a prisoner, she contrived to learn much of the art of vocal and physical expression from the singing and dancing girls, who, in his moments of relaxation in his own land, were Kalama's favorite distraction.

The pain in her heart craved outlet, as does all deep mental suffering. She had little singing voice in point of lyric beauty, but she possessed to a curious degree the power of the expression of any emotion through the speaking voice. And this voice was a broad, vibrating instrument, with dark, wild notes in it and the throb of that pain in her heart, which when she sang made itself felt like the recurrent beat of a gray sea.

One day Kalama had heard her as he entered noiselessly from the courtyard filled with roses, upon which her rooms opened. Listening in the shadow he had realized that in her beauty had become but secondary. For his own gratification, in the six months of his sojourn in his own country he had her more carefully taught, and when he removed to Constantinople, and thence to Paris, it was his delight to listen to her.

In Paris, where she had been taken, just as the first frosts of another autumn were plucking the shuddering leaves from the trees, she found her liberty less curtailed, for in Paris Murad Bey assumed once again the habits of Occidental civilization. Furthermore, he had not yet to fear her leaving him, since the man whom he had sworn to aid had only just won back to health and strength, and had still to achieve that glory which no gold could buy and no influence however great secure for him—lacking his own power to win it. Yet without that wealth and influence, for which, and his very life, she had bartered herself, the woman who was known as La Belle Therese knew that his genius might have labored doubly handicapped.

On a certain frosty morning in November she contrived to go out alone and on foot. After a humiliating experience with the underlings "clothed in a little brief authority," with which all real power is surrounded, she finally gained speech with a well known theatrical manager, who received her courteously, heard her sing, appraised her loveliness with a shrewd eye, and when with a sort of proud timidity she told her name—the only name which

the world had ever accorded her—he looked at her in amazement. He had heard the name of La Belle Therese many times—who had not? He had also heard wild tales of barbaric beauty, luxury and indulgence, coupled with the world celebrity of Murad Bey—and when he had heard of his return to Paris, accompanied by the mysterious woman about whom speculation was rife, he had been curious.

Now—unexpectedly—she stood before him, shrinking into herself as he looked at her, and in the intensity of his surprise he was for a moment speechless. He had pictured to himself a voluptuous, full ripened beauty, with dazzling, insolent eyes, a radiant self-confidence, a display of jewels in Oriental profusion. He could not believe that La Belle Therese was this slender girl in her plain black dress, unadorned by a single jewel, her large hazel eyes looking at him straightly and steadfastly beneath the broad black hat which shadowed her face. And it was her face, with its spiritual and noble lines, proud, without any of the conscious vanity of beauty, which puzzled him more than her demeanor.

It was the face of a woman whom, had she sought an interview with him unnamed, he would have treated with deference. Yet, despite his own involuntary movement of respect, he realized that this was in truth the famous Therese who stood before him asking for an engagement to sing under his management. He wondered exceedingly, but he contrived not to let his wonder interfere with the advantageous terms in his own behalf of the contract which he presently drew up for signature. He knew that fortune had favored him surprisingly that morning, and he had no mind to let his good luck escape him.

When she finally left his office she was under contract to sing for three months in one of the largest variety theaters under French control. The idea of such a career was less abhorrent to her than the drifting idleness of her life in the house of Murad Bey.

When she told him what she had done he showed a temper which even she had never yet seen in him. He endeavored to break the contract she had made, but without result, even on his offer of a forfeit. He considered leaving Paris and putting her forcibly beyond the reach of French law; and then grew still more furious, because he did not wish to leave Paris at that time, nor did he wish to separate himself from Therese. And this indeed was the keynote of his rage and apprehension. He feared that she meant to leave him, although the half of his promises still remained unfulfilled, and most of all he feared the admiration of other men.

He compromised at length by stipulating that she should never be alone. Indeed her consent was but a form, since she was practically a prisoner and the servants who waited upon her with such obsequiousness were at the same time her guards.

Yet even thus, the measure of success she achieved, the applause of the people, the long hours of study and the ultimate nights of triumph were consolation to her—sometimes even brought her hours which were nearer happiness than she had thought ever to know again; and more than outbalanced to her sick heart the intimacies of the *coulisses*, the brutalities to which she was occasionally exposed.

Also her talent seemed to offer her a future outlet of escape. Owing to her ignorance of such matters, she received comparatively little under the terms of her first three months' contract, while the promises which Murad Bey had made her on behalf of Michael Trevis he had craftily extended over as long a period of time as possible. Yet he had not broken his word, and was doing, and meant to do, all that he had promised, since he believed that from Trevis—though he should gain all the fame and riches of the world—he had now nothing to fear in the possession of Therese.

Trevis had recovered slowly—reluctantly. While still convalescent, he and his nurses had been removed



to his old lodgings in the Rue d'Assas, and there had been approached by a wealthy Greek picture dealer, whom he knew only by repute, whose secret mission it was to flatter and cajole him into some semblance of interest again in life and art.

The Greek posed as his benefactor, claiming his gratitude for having rescued him in his poverty and desperate illness, and succeeded so well with generous offers of purchase that the early winter saw Trevis established in a studio in Florence.

But Murad Bey was astute and far-seeing, and for more than a year had succeeded in effectually tying the hands of the woman who had bartered him her body and soul in order to save the man she loved.

He had surrounded her with a luxury, drawn from the best in both Eastern and Western life, and deceived at first by her quiescent acceptance, believed that when the terms of the barter—purposely prolonged by him—were fulfilled, no other manner of life would appeal to her.

Already in his gallery hung her portrait by an acknowledged master, the youngest and the fairest of that marvelous group, and the admiration it excited daily salved the vanity hurt by her contempt.

But deep below all considerations of lust, of vanity, of cynical habit, there was growing up in the man a sullen respect for this woman, to which he would not give utterance: deep down in the turgid depths of him was something akin to veneration, to love for her, to which he would rather have died than give voice.

On her side, though hating him with a dreadful, still, white hatred, that he only half divined, yet now that Trevis's life had been saved, she would not draw back, lest she render his sacrifice worse than valueless in giving the artist an existence barren of any of the things he had cared to live for.

She knew the weight of Kalama's wealth and influence. She knew that he could make or mar in the artistic

world, and though he might not actually have the power to completely and ultimately oppose a man of Trevis's gifts, yet his enmity, with its subtle, secret, far-reaching Oriental watchfulness, could and would block and embitter his path for years. She gave herself another twelvemonth of martyrdom, for Trevis to rise where no enmity could drag him down—then she meant to be free!

But she had forgotten that she was dealing with an Oriental.

To Kalama, her indifference toward his efforts to please and adorn her were wormwood. For her he had collected jewels rare as stars; he had brought deft slave women from Circassia and Morocco to surround and wait upon her; he had given her pure-blooded Arabian horses which were the talk and the envy of Paris. Finally, on her appearance in public, he had had costumes which were marvels of Eastern richness and Occidental taste designed for her, but she had refused to even try them on.

"If I sing, I will sing as myself, not as your creature," she said abruptly, when he came to her violently to know her reasons. Nor could any argument alter her pride in the matter, nor move her determination not to rely upon rousing an audience to enthusiasm by appearing as a dress-maker's model.

"They can go to Doucet's *atelier* for that," she said contemptuously, as the anxious maids, watching the storm in their master's eye, spread the gemmed and glittering costumes before her.

Kalama would have indulged and despised her had she sunk to the level of his gifts and caprices. But because of that defiance he secretly respected her, yet could not rest while her pride remained unbroken to his will.

When she left her dressing room for the first time, in the November following her year of study, she wore a long, dull black dress, straight of line and cloudily soft, and only a little open to her round throat.

On her there was not a single jewel.

For a moment her audience had been disappointed. They had expected a figure gilded, painted, decorated like a Nautch girl. Then as her matchless loveliness dawned upon them there were murmurs and quickly taken breaths which went over the crowded theater like a sudden wind in trees.

She began to sing very simply and quietly. In her heart there was a message to give to these people; the message that every true artist, be he poet, painter, musician or singer, has had since the world began—the message of human pain.

She had chosen a ballad of Provence, and an Oriental song full of the mystery and passion of the East, which she half sang, half recited, in her somber throaty voice, with its throb and its curious guttural breaks, that were yet the essence of expression, and sometimes made a sudden shudder of nervous tension, almost of apprehension, go over her hearers.

When she left the theater that night her heart was a little lightened. She knew that the city spoke of her now more as the artist of achievement and merit, and less as the mysterious and nameless woman who rode behind Kalama's Arabians, and a year ago had for a brief space shone in his jewels in more than one pleasure capital, lending herself to the thousand extravagances of his caprice.

From that moment she grasped again at self-respect and the shattered remnants of pride and faith. She had long refused to wear his jewels, nor would she, in spite of many stormy scenes, appear in them again.

And now even the Eastern embroideries in which she had been clad were laid aside for the simplest of black or white; and pleading the need of exercise as a relaxation after the exactions of her work she went when possible on foot, followed always at a little distance by one or the other of those whose orders were never to lose her from sight.

To Paris she was still mysterious, with a changed, yet unfathomable

mystery, whose very impossibility of solution did but increase her vogue. Yet, in the midst of fame and youth and unbounded luxury, it was rare to see a woman with such sad eyes as hers, or a woman of her repute with a bearing at once so simple and so proud.

For she knew that the very men who sought her acquaintance with such eagerness despised her in their hearts for what they imagined her to be.

To Kalama, she threatened defeat, and now more than ever did she stir his pride of possession, his complex and cynical passions. More than all did she arouse in him as never before something relentless, cruel, dominant, yet almost tender, which was as nearly love as a man of his creed and ancestry could perhaps ever know.

And day by day his subtle brain was busy with the threads of fate which lay within his hand.

## XVIII

Of all the things that a man can promise a woman, the promise of reform for her sake is most tempting.

The Duchess of Vallona, in her second marriage to a noble of Rome, had not been actuated by ambition alone—for Vallona, silken with practice, had known better than most men how to play the lover and the vassal. He was essentially a man of the world, with all the charm—when he chose to forget his arrogance and weariness—that close intercourse with the best of life can confer. Apart from the greatness of his name and place the thought of the conquest of such a man had attracted her strongly.

At first, their existence had been varied and splendid. In their Roman palace they revived ancient splendors, and for a time the woman basked in the atmosphere which she had coveted.

She had no real affection for Vallona, however, and proceeded to amuse herself as she had always done. But the savor of life seemed dulled, and the sting of the world's smile at her

husband's inconstancies, her own waning power to charm him, was with her like a constant knife thrust.

In moments such as these the thought of Trevis returned to her like a balm. He indeed had loved her. In the voluntary poverty and simplicity which he had wished her to assume, he would have loved her more.

And she came to dwell with curious persistence upon the thought of him and the mad, unthinking, selfless devotion he had offered her.

At that time she began to hear his name spoken as that of a man of extraordinary promise and ability. She saw photographs of him in the papers, and one of her friends bought a head by him called "The Puritan," and hung it in a conspicuous place in her drawing room.

It was the head of a woman, wrapped in severe folds of heavy sackcloth, with a cross conspicuous at the throat. But under the rough habit, as though in mockery of its assumption, the eyes allured, the lips invited with unmistakable meaning.

Maria Vallona, knowing the history of the girl, thought to trace in the lines of the face a resemblance which did not exist to the model Therese.

This canvas, the first he had painted since his illness, caused so much comment that a small exhibition of other paintings by him was arranged in Rome by Constantine Keshani.

He went reluctantly, always dreading to meet the woman who had betrayed him, and whom in his stormy parting he had meant never to see again.

For a while he was successful in his avoidance of her, but her determination to talk with him once more was as strong as his desire to evade a meeting. And so, one evening at a small dinner, at which he had taken pains to assure himself she would not be present, he had to sit beside her through a nightmare meal.

As he leaned courteously toward her in the exchange of dinner party banter or commonplace, outwardly composed

and coolly at ease, his whole being was in tumult.

Yet his mood, as he watched her, was one of singular disillusion—a sort of critical coldness which at every turn showed him his past folly, his idolatry of clay, yet the realization brought him only an aching desolation, a sensation of standing in eternal loneliness among gray ruins.

There seemed nothing left but the longing for rest, for forgetfulness.

It was not long before he saw, with a stinging self-contempt for having been dazzled and ruined by her arts, that having satisfied her ambition by her marriage with Vallona, she was now seeking to regain his own attention. And there was a new note in the woman's mood—one of anxiety, of seeking, of pleading, which smote his consciousness with a dull and impotent pain that this reversing of their positions should have come too late, yet left him frozen in this new cynicism and despair which nothing seemed to lighten or to break.

The thought of Therese was constantly with him in this renewal of past association. He forgot at times her shame and only remembered her old tenderness, her appealing youth—as he would have thought of one dead.

In his loneliness and humiliation he almost returned to his early love for her. Then he awoke and remembered that she was the mistress of Murad Bey.

The Duchess of Vallona he saw several times after that first encounter; in the street, and at houses where she went, hoping to meet him, and piqued to a hitherto unknown eagerness by his avoidance. For he did avoid her openly, even when chance or her own manoeuvring threw them together. The mere sight of her and the sound of her voice hurt him too much.

When she entered a room he left if he could do so without attracting attention.

On one of these occasions, when she had made her appearance very late, his immediate departure, just after she had entered wearing all her jewels, with a

group of male satellites about her, angered her so much that on the plea of a sudden indisposition she abruptly left the house and drove rapidly home. As she neared her door a carriage passed her going in the opposite direction. In it she saw her husband and a famous Roman beauty, in whom, said the rumor of the five o'clock tea table, he was in imminent danger of finding his Waterloo.

A wave of fury passed over Maria Vallona as she entered her house and stood choking in the midst of its brilliantly lighted solitude.

She saw herself scepterless and dethroned where she most desired to rule.

Then she did a mad, uncalculating thing; perhaps the first uncalculated, ungoverned impulse of her life.

She pulled the long cloak she had worn back about her shoulders, turned narrow-eyed and feline to the door and went out into the street on foot.

Trevis was alone in one of the rooms which he had temporarily fitted up as a studio during his stay in Rome. It was a workmanlike place, bare of floor and wall, with its long, littered table and tall easel looming gauntly in the flickering red light from the open fire.

The artist was standing by the window, looking dully down into the street, which at that late hour was almost deserted. He scarcely heard the soft opening and closing of the door, the gliding step upon the floor; but at the rustle of a woman's dress beside him he turned slowly.

The Duchess of Vallona stood looking at him, her head thrown back, her eyes mere points of sea-green light. She had let her cloak slip to the floor as she came, and her splendid, gleaming dress, her white breast and arms, the coils of her black hair, seemed alight with the jewels that studded them.

She put out her hand and laid it upon his arm.

"Michael"—she said huskily—"Michael."

For the moment she could find no other words.

Her jealousy, her sense of injury and

desertion, her new-born love, were struggling in her and rending her.

The man recoiled a little from her touch. For a moment he wished to crush her in his grasp and kiss her with the same feeling of cold passion which she had roused in him once before. The next he had stepped back and released his arm.

His tone when he spoke held a new authority, of which as in old days of subservience to her will he had never dreamed.

"You should not have come here," he said. "It was a mad thing to do. You were not used to be so eager, madame."

She turned away from him and flung herself into a chair, dropping her sullen face between her hands.

"No one saw me come," she said. "The street was quite deserted. I wore a thick veil, and your servant did not see my face. I am many things now that I was not of old."

Trevis turned up the lamp, so that the whole room was bright, and stood in front of her with folded arms.

"Perhaps you have not realized, Duchessa, in coming here," he said simply and coldly, "that I also am many things that I was not of old."

She looked up at him palely, the triumphant allurements gone from her face, and seemed to shrink under her jewels.

"I did not wait to realize anything," she said in a low voice, "except that my husband has left me—that life is intolerable—that I love you—you—Michael."

Suddenly she rose, and with her lithe, swift movement was at his feet, her upraised hands upon his arms.

"Nothing is any use without love; I have come to understand that. Don't you remember the old days—how sweet they were? Can't you forgive and love me still?"

Trevis looked down at her. There were longing and repulsion in his face—the shadow of what might have been and what was.

"You belong to the Duke of Vallona," he said harshly at length. "You

made your choice long ago. You cannot change anything now."

But she still clung to him.

"I will do anything you say. We will go to Egypt together as you longed to do. We can be happy yet—"

She paused, arrested by the still contempt upon his face as he drew back from her still further.

"It is too late," he said sternly. "Once it would have been heaven—now it would be hell."

He walked over to where her cloak had fallen upon the floor and returned, holding it ready for her.

"It is very late," he said more gently. "Try to remember how you will regret all this tomorrow. We must both forget that this hour has ever passed between us."

She had remained kneeling upon the floor where he had left her. Now she got to her feet almost heavily, stumbling a little among the sweeping folds of her velvet dress. Silently she let him put the muffling cloak and the thick veil about her, and as silently, without a backward look or word, she left him.

And the artist, looking gray-faced into the falling embers of his fire, was tasting the last bitterness, the very dregs of life, which come only to those who mourn a love not only lost, but defiled.

For it is a bitter and a terrible thing to have loved with a great love the unworthy and the vile.

## XIX

It was a still, frosty night in January, and the big music hall on the Boulevard des Capucines, where in white electric lights the name of Therese flared above the heads of surging crowds, was slowly filling to its doors with those who came in late, merely to hear the two or three songs which she would sing.

It was so every night, but she never looked at the people. Above their heads in the darkened theater she pretended to herself that she saw a ray of light striking downward, and she looked at that. Sometimes, too, with

the clearness of her dreams, a man's brilliant face came there; and then she closed her eyes in an agony which her critics thought was a mannerism.

Tonight in a moment of bitterness she had chosen her song, giving rein to a long subdued impulse of pain and despair, which filled her voice to breaking, and caught at the heart of her hearers with a strange appeal that would not be denied:

*"Sabine un jour  
A tout vendu sa beauté de colombe  
Et son amour  
Pour le collier du Comte de Saladagne,  
Pour un bijou . . .  
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne  
Me rendra fou!"*

The theater was extraordinarily hushed, for she had never sung before as she sang on this night, when it seemed as though her grief and her talent together reached their culmination.

In her fancy, as she sang the stinging yet despairing words of the poem, she saw the face of Michael Trevis as it must have looked when he learned of what she had done—contemptuous, weary, stricken, skeptical of all good forevermore:

*. . . "Pour un bijou . . .  
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne  
Me rendra fou."*

Thus he believed, and must believe, that she had fallen for the jewels which in the beginning had loaded her. So must he, and all others, believe.

As the words lingered on her lips, the electric consciousness of an intense regard from one of the boxes on her right made her turn her head, and as she did so, two contemptuous, gray-green eyes looked full into hers.

In the box the Duchess of Vallona was leaning slightly forward. She held a broad feather fan between her face and the audience, but over its plummy top her relentless, scornful, triumphant gaze spoke more plainly than words.

For a moment the singer faltered piteously in her lines, and a great wave of bitterness engulfed and choked her. Then with a gesture so forlorn and desolate that those who saw it remembered it long after, she moved



hastily back and disappeared in the wings.

There was immediately a thunder of applause to recall her for her next song, but she went blindly toward her dressing room like a hurt thing that seeks shelter to hide its wound. She passed her manager and spoke to him over her shoulder as she went.

"I am ill, Duretti. I will not go on again. Call the next turn."

Murad Bey, who was still in her room, sprang to his feet as she entered. Alarmed at her look he went toward her, but she brushed by him.

"Are you ill? What is the matter?" he asked with real anxiety and concern.

For a moment her high courage failed her, and she leaned against him weakly, hiding her eyes.

"Don't talk to me now—I can't bear it. Take me—take me—back."

She had never once referred to his house in the Rue de Ponthieu as home, and Kalama smiled grimly as he heard.

He drew her hand through his arm and led her out to the side entrance, where a carriage was waiting.

As they emerged from the stage door a man walking rapidly across their path started as though from a deep reverie as he brushed against them, and raising his head to voice a hasty apology, looked for a brief instant into the eyes of La Belle Therese and of the man on whose arm she leaned.

The flaring arc light in front of the theater revealed them relentlessly to Trevis's eyes in that lightning-swift moment that was yet a lifetime.

Then like a man whose faculties are numbed, he moved aside and passed them rapidly without a word or sign.

Behind them in the brilliant theater a woman high of place and corrupt of heart wore before the world the crown of innocence. In the house of Murad Bey another woman for the salvation of a human soul was accounted vile.

## XX

IN his rooms on the Boulevard St. Germain Michael Trevis sat alone,

huddled over the wood fire of which only a spark remained.

It was long past midnight, but he had sent away his servants an hour ago, unwilling that any eyes should note the black mood which was upon him.

Leaning forward in his chair, his hands between his knees, his eyes on the red embers, he was drinking the dregs of a bitter cup whose outward seeming was of gold.

For he was become a man stripped of all illusion, all hope, all future, save that which might lie in his art and its achievements.

All capacity for human affection in him, he thought, was dead. Certainly never again could there come to him more than a misty semblance of the awakening of springtime, any more than it can come to the tree which a lightning stroke has blasted.

No more, even in appearance, was he the Michael Trevis of two years past. The beauty of his face was like the beauty of a stone mask, so much of life, of color, of youth, had gone out of it. His dark hair had a lock or two of gray near the temples; the confident trust of eyes and manner was merged in harshness; the shrinking of the whole man from his kind sheltered itself in aloofness and distrust.

In this hour the shock of that meeting on the Boulevard burned in him like a knife thrust. At one moment his conscience—his remorse at his own desertion—clamored aloud to him, then the thought of the woman's easy acceptance of wealth and its consolations at so shameful a price hardened his heart and twisted his lip with mirthless contempt. How quickly riches had proved a balm for her wound! She had justified his act by what she had done.

That Maria dei Valencia should have deceived and used him was bitterer than death to him, but that Therese, whose love he had set aside, but in whose honor and integrity he had believed, should have proved both weak and corrupt set the foundations of all good in him to crumbling, and bred in him a cynicism so savage, so intense,

that the very throngs of unknown humanity that passed him unwitting in the streets seemed to wear demon faces, and to bear, each one, a potentiality for evil stronger than the might of God Himself in the scales of good.

Yet his armor of mockery, his hatred of men and women and their savage physical or moral cruelty each to the other, was often pitifully desolate—aching loneliness masquerading under the cynicism that is akin to despair; mockery flinging out a smileless jest only as a shield for tears.

Of his illness he retained a memory that was like a great moral scar. He recalled his dreadful wanderings in the streets of Paris; he remembered the purchase of the revolver and the return to his own room. After that existed a blank until he awoke to consciousness once more, to find himself in the hands of doctors and nurses and on the road to convalescence. He was in his own studio in the Rue d'Assas. From his opened windows the heat and languor and dust of the latter days of August came to his dulled and weary senses. He had not energy enough to wonder; he merely lay still, resting like a man rocked in an open boat with his face to the sky.

In the beginning of September, when the pneumonia and fever had left him broken but convalescent, he had been moved to a couch, and a few days later, on a cool, golden day, Constantine Keshani, a Greek picture dealer whom he knew well by reputation, came to his studio. Trevis, painfully gaunt in the full light of the window near which he lay, raised his hollow, dark eyes and looked at his visitor for a moment in silence.

"You won my last fifty francs," he said at length, with a faint smile.

The Greek started for an instant, and a dark flush suffused his face; then reassured by the pathetic banter of the artist he took a seat near him and summoned an answering lightness.

"I remember you," he said, "but I had no idea on that night that you were doing more than amusing yourself, or that the turn of the card meant any-

thing to you. For me it meant merely—"

"Fifty francs—a bagatelle," interrupted Trevis, with a faint, mirthless laugh.

"No," said the other slowly; "it was the game that counted. For me it meant that—I won."

He rose abruptly, and went to stand before a small study hanging on the opposite wall, and his back was toward the artist as he resumed.

"It is only poetically just, Mr. Trevis, that as I was the winner of that last fifty francs I should put you in the way of getting it back at a hundred per cent. interest."

He turned about squarely, and looked at the other curiously with his shifting, brilliant eyes.

"Before it was sent to the Vallona palace in Rome," he said deliberately, "I was so fortunate as to get a glimpse of a lady's portrait which you painted some months ago. It was because of that portrait that I wished to keep in touch with your future work. It was because of its promise that I found and rescued you."

Trevis upon his couch, his eyes fastened with a touch of eagerness upon the narrow, crafty face of the Greek, turned suddenly very pale.

"You mean the portrait of the Contessa dei Valencia," he said in a low voice.

Keshani regarded him for an instant with an imperceptible smile.

"No," he answered with emphasis, "I mean the portrait of the Duchess of Vallona."

Trevis made no reply, but he winced perceptibly and closed his eyes for a moment.

Yet, although Keshani had been well instructed in his part, the admiration he had come prepared only to assume became genuine as he looked over some of the studies and finished canvases on the walls. He discerned unlimited talent and future in their creator, who, could he have known it, lay often in sleepless nights face downward on his bed cursing the life and suffering which had been preserved in him.

As he studied the paintings under their betraying dust, he realized that here was no need for hypocrisy—yet realized also that without the power of Murad Bey the canvases, fine though they were, would probably have accumulated many more layers of dust and cobwebs and the artist have died of starvation before they found a purchaser. Or, had the influence of the Turk been exerted against them, it was more than probable that they would never have found a purchaser at all.

Certain it is that whatever might have been his artistic career had suffering never come to him, the full realization of pain had bred in Michael Trevis a higher power and the command which only suffering, the source of all creative artistic force, can confer.

At this time, a few days before his departure from Paris, he knew that the tide of fortune had turned, though now too late. A man, an American, called upon him, looked over his pictures and bought two at an extravagantly large price. He let it be understood that he came upon the recommendation of Mrs. Van Vleet; and Trevis, too weary and indifferent to wonder or combat, accepted the fact silently.

In reality, the man had been an agent of Murad Bey. But now, with the sale of these pictures and the removal of all financial necessity, there rose in Michael Trevis the real beginnings of greatness.

When he went to the south of France and thence to Italy, where he eventually established himself in Florence near his old quarters, he was an artist of talent and ability merely, but in two years he had risen above the needs which had once obsessed him.

He became one of the great poetic and creative geniuses of his time; but his heart and soul felt like dead, shriveled things within him, and the hair at his temples was white.

Living in solitude in old sunny Florence—shunning all human intercourse—painting, painting always, since it was the only thing left to do—the only reason for and vindication of

life—the desolation that was in him rose and intensified the already fierce necessity for action, for achievement, for expression of itself; and he produced two pictures.

The first, painted in the earliest moments of his disillusion and despair, he had called "Lilith."

The enchantress in her snow white beauty stood, life size, against the age-blackened and moss-grown trunk of a mighty cypress. Her night-black hair was loosened, as though by the wind which seemed visibly to stir it, and one great tress of it, heightening the whiteness of her limbs, fell partly over her breast, and thence to her left knee, like a veil of dusky silk.

Her face was the face of an immortally beautiful woman, but it was also the face of a snake. The strange flattening of forehead and nostrils, while preserving the beauty of the countenance, yet lent to it a sinister and almost awful character.

The eyes were green. Perhaps in their deepest shadows lurked a hint of gray, but the high lights were of the opaque brilliance of polished jade.

The woman herself was the snake incarnate.

On a wakeful night, when memory would not let him sleep, Trevis had painted the hypnotic fascination of that gaze by lamplight, and so well had he succeeded that the eyes lived and their power drew the beholder like a spell.

Yet this thing of bitterness had found its natural balance in the second canvas, no less a masterpiece.

It represented merely a vast cliff, rising jagged and black from a bottomless chasm. Toward the summit of the cliff a man with bleeding, outstretched hands climbed painfully, his transfigured face uplifted to the single star whose rays silvered the lonely and barren crest.

The picture was called "The Quest of the Ideal," and though instinct with a very high spiritual quality, it yet sounded that note of cynicism and despair which had become dominant in the artist. The face of the climber

was transfigured by his own soul and by the star rays falling on it from above, but the summit toward which he strove was barren.

As he sat in the fading redness of the firelight he asked himself again vainly and wearily, "To what end?"

Could wealth and attainment compensate him for the lost, pain-wrung years?

And he knew it could not.

For the cup of gold held a black and poisoned draught, the more terrible since his own hand had aided in its brewing.

He thought of Therese and her early and innocent love for him. He thought of the little house of dreams where they had meant to dwell together. He thought of the hours which they had meant to pass in exquisite companionship, that now were forever vanished; and as he thought, the face of the "Lilith" rose between the thought and him and was an agony, as all love must be which has grown to loathe itself and its object and yet loves on.

Then, his cynicism melting, he cursed himself for his weakness and desertion and his new hardness. His own self-justification forgotten, he saw nakedly the truth—that the failure of his love alone had driven Therese to infamy. He pictured her mad with pain and grief, sinking to shame on an impulse of wild and reckless despair, of futile revenge.

Yet, as he mused on it, he knew no less surely than he knew his own weakness that in the hour in which Maria dei Valencia had marked him as the instrument of her vanity he had had no more real power to withdraw himself from the hypnotic spell of her influence than a man who, enchained by the sinister gaze of a serpent, approaches little by little, little by little, knowing the while that the end is death.

So, on this night of his return to Paris, when the pictures which had been sent before had already found the fame accorded only to genius, and the name of the creator of "Lilith"

was in every mouth, he knew that it was all but a handful of gray ashes in the hollow of his hand.

For to the poet life where love is not impossible. In the gloom, the alluring, mocking smile of the Duchess of Vallona, the stricken, yearning eyes of La Belle Therese, as she shrank against Kalama's arm, rose to torture and to taunt him . . .

He had dreamed of fame, worked and striven for it, lived over and over in his imagination the realization of it, and now he found that this was fame—this mortal weariness of the soul . . .

## XXI

"He is coming; I have netted him," said Simone d'Avray jubilantly, in the sacred precincts of the old Faubourg St. Germain, welcoming a few choice spirits of the extreme *haute gomme*.

"We are all to go to the exhibition," she announced, "and take Mr. Trevis with us to worship at the shrine of his 'Lilith,' though he struggled against that, and tried to put me off with cards to the private view of all his paintings that he gave a week ago."

She paused for breath and to finish her tea, which had grown cold, apparently oblivious of the fact that she had more than once superciliously alluded in former days to the famous artist, whom she was now only too flattered to receive, as "that Trevis person." "I did not go," she concluded with her usual *aplomb*. "I know private views from bitter experience. Nothing is more un-private. One finds oneself in the midst of a polite mob, one's dress crushed, one's opinion continually solicited—and not listened to—by enthusiastic amateurs about things one really knows nothing of in the way of 'tones' and 'treatments'—some of which look like absent ones; and all the while a living wall struggling politely in front of the very pictures about which one is

supposed to rave, but at which one really scarcely gets a glimpse."

She paused a moment, interrupted by the entrance of Michael Trevis himself.

He looked thinner, and consequently taller than before his illness. His dark face was worn, but iron-hard, and much of its younger beauty had been sacrificed to the added dignity of its expression.

But Trevis was not impressed; only weary, and impatient of his own indifference and reserve.

As he talked to one or another of the exclusive little circle about him, with a courtesy that was almost mechanical, he wondered why he could not be content with what life had given him.

He remembered the time when to be one of these people seemed to him like the desire of the moth for the flame. He had imagined them always clever, always beautiful or charming, always rich and marvelously clothed.

He found them, behind the shelter of their titles or position or money, very much like the humbler dwellers in the Rue d'Assas and Montmartre and the Latin Quarter. He found them people with heartbreaks or heartaches like himself; people with noble or ignoble ambitions; people whom life had petted unwarrantably, or to whom life meant tragedy of one sort or another. He found very great ladies with simple frocks and simpler manners, and he found equally great ones with the souls of *cocottes* and the manners of fishwives.

He found as much arrogance and as much humility in the court as in the kitchen, and he learned that a man's personality and a man's deeds on the side of evil or of good are all that really count in the continual great summing-up of life.

So he sat and talked and laughed with those near him with the same simplicity and the same inward sense of dullness and lethargic indifference under all the charm of his outward bearing that he felt when a party of young Bohemians, seeking the goal which he had attained, lured him to dine in some

recently discovered restaurant solely dedicated to their own orgies.

He often wondered as he watched them if those among them who achieved fame would hold it as lightly as he, or find in it as deep a bitterness as he had done.

His life at this moment of its highest attainment was savorless and gray. People and events seemed like passing shadows, and he appeared only to live at the moments of creation and achievement in his art.

Yet sometimes, too, there was a gleam of pleasure in helping some student who had stacked up promising canvases, and begun to paint fans and dinner cards for a living, or in anonymously giving a holiday to some working girl pale-faced over her embroidery.

So he seemed in some dim way to have done something for Therese herself—to have drawn, if ever so little a way, nearer to her again.

When the tea and cakes had been duly and ceremoniously disposed of, the vivacious little Baronne proposed an immediate adjournment to the gallery where Trevis's picture was on exhibition. Although there were many others in the collection, no one at that time spoke of anything but "Lilith," the more especially as France herself had acquired the painting at a fabulous sum, rival bids having come from both England and America.

As they grouped themselves before the great picture hanging isolated at one end of the gallery, a little hush fell upon the gazers.

In the late afternoon light, the eyes of the snake-woman, green and hypnotic and soulless, seemed to mock them with their terrible truth. The immortally beautiful serpent's face, set in the midnight blackness of its streaming hair, with its flattened forehead and nostrils, its scarlet and enticing lips, in spite of its brilliance looked infinitely old with the age and knowledge and evil of the whole world.

Against the blackened cypress, the snow white limbs gleamed with sinuous allurements, and a faint clinging of moss upon the rough bark shared with

the woman's eyes the same dull and opaque hue of jade.

Trevis, as he stood a little apart, looking up at his own work with a strange smile, was suddenly conscious of a presence at his side. With a quick intake of his breath he turned to look into the face of Maria Vallona.

He had not known that she was in Paris. In her dark furs he thought she looked sligher and paler than he remembered her. She stood beside him a moment in silence, without any word of greeting, looking up at the "Lilith." Her lips trembled a little as she gazed, then she turned and spoke to him quietly.

"You painted that for me," she said in a low tone.

Trevis gazed at her for a moment in silence.

"I painted it for your type, madame," he said slowly. "It is ever present."

He turned on the words and moved away, filled with a sudden, burning rebellion at the apparent aimlessness of life. Once he had passionately desired the woman whom he had just bitterly repulsed. Now she would have given herself to him at a smile—but it was too late. Even if he had not learned to despise his own love for her, he could never, he thought, crawl again to her feet in Vallona's absence for word of hers.

Life seemed like that everywhere—everything awry, everything too late, a golden cup of bitterness with a rose-decked rim to invite the eager lip.

As though to shake off his own thoughts, he wandered away from the others to a dim corner of the hall. He was reputed eccentric, morose, at times almost rude. When he was rude or harsh people smiled indulgently. He was Michael Trevis, and could do as he pleased. They looked after him now, but none of the gay women who flattered him ventured to call him back or intrude upon his thoughts.

It was growing late, and presently he saw them, singly and in groups, drop away from before the great central canvas, linger here and there

before other paintings, and then depart, intent upon their own pleasures.

Aimlessly, yet with a subconscious intention, he had come to a stand before one of his early pictures for which Therese had been the model. It was practically a portrait of her, her slim shoulders in their shabby dress, her beautiful young head with its heavy plaits of chestnut hair, upon a background of dull blue.

As he turned away with a sigh, he saw her come into the now almost deserted gallery, followed by two dark-faced attendants, who seemed like veritable shadows. She stood for a long time before the picture of the "Lilith."

With a deep breath he moved back and watched her unseen. She wore the plain black which had become a part of her celebrity, but in spite of its somber severity, the ivory purity and beauty of her face emerged intensified. Yet there was a hard, scornful look in her hazel eyes as she looked at the masterpiece for whose attaining, for the life of whose creator, she had given love and honor and peace.

After a little while she moved away, and wandered slowly here and there, looking at this picture and at that; but always to the watcher it seemed that she moved as one who drags a heavy chain.

Finally she came to that small, obscurely hung portrait of herself, and her shadowed face leaped for a moment into sudden, vivid life, and as sudden pain. She stood—her hands caught together on her breast—and the man who watched her saw that the slow, bitter tears of a long repressed agony were streaming silently down her up-raised face.

And as he watched, he wondered. Where in this simple and lonely figure was to be found the flaunting courtesan, the mistress of Prince Murad Bey? This, with only the melancholy of the eyes accentuated and the springlike buoyancy gone from the figure, was the Therese that he had known and loved when life was young.



In the darkness where he stood he put out his hands toward her suddenly—blindly.

With a quick movement he would have gone to her, humbly and tenderly, but in the very act he saw her two attendants suddenly draw back, bowing low. Like a dark shadow in the place, Murad Bey came down the gallery, and after a few words she went out with him wearily and mutely into the gathering shadows of the winter evening.

But as she went she lifted her eyes and saw Trevis standing there, looking after her, his hand half outstretched as if to hold her back.

## XXII

THAT evening Murad Bey, coming in late from a dinner at the Turkish Embassy, went up to his own particular room, where no guest had ever been allowed to enter. Slipping off his evening coat, he wrapped himself in an embroidered mantle and threw himself down on one of the broad *divans* under the crimson light of the hanging lamps. An Arab boy brought him coffee and a *narghile*, and retired.

Murad Bey's mind, for the moment, was on Trevis and the unexpected success which he had made. Almost—since that afternoon in the gallery when he had seen the look in his eyes, and in the eyes of Therese—almost he repented him of the bargain which he had made. Of a sudden, as he had seen the artist face to face again, at the very apex of fame and fortune, and the look in the eyes of the woman who loved him, his hitherto negative dislike had sprung into instant and active hatred. Had it been possible he would have undone the aid which he had given; but he knew that even to his wealth and influence this was not now possible.

Still, there were other ways—other ways—

His eyes narrowed to mere slits—mere shining threads of Oriental secrecy and hate.

Now that he had fulfilled the exact letter of his bargain there remained no bond that could prevent him from striking how and when he chose—preferably and Orientally in the dark.

For strike he would, rather than Therese should leave him and be free to love that man if she chose. He would kill the woman rather than see her pass from his keeping into freedom.

He was roused from his thoughts by a light footfall and the white shimmer of a woman's gown under the ruby-colored lights.

Therese stood beside him, looking at him with wide open, shining eyes. Her long coat of dark fur was thrown back on her shoulders and her hands were adjusting the lace scarf wound about her head and throat.

The Turk rose quickly and came toward her. Something in her manner disturbed him, put him on his guard.

"Did you sing well—did everything go smoothly tonight?" he asked.

She answered him with a blaze of passionate anger, which he had never heard or seen in her before.

"Yes, everything went smoothly, so long as your orders were carried out and I remained quiescent. How dare you place servants about me to spy on my movements, or prevent them? How dared you do it from the beginning? Did you think my patience, my submissiveness to all insult, while you exacted your pound of flesh to the very last drop of blood, was without end?"

She turned, walked to the further wall, then flashed upon him again, with that bitter hatred which, smoldering so long, had burst now into but the brighter flame.

"Do you think I shall always remain your slave out of mere habit—mere indulgence? Did you think I had forgotten my shame and never dreamed of my hour of escape?"

He looked at her for a moment.

"What do you mean?" he said at length.

"You grow dull," she answered contemptuously. "Tonight when I left the theater I ordered them—your ob-

sequious jailers—to drive me to a hotel. I had done with you; our compact was at an end—I thought that I had only to quit your house and your presence when the moment came, and go out into the world with bare hands to make my way."

She paused for a moment, pressing her hands against her breast.

"They refused," she said as one who strangles under a strong hand. "They entered the carriage with me, and held me to prevent my leaving it on foot. They brought me—back."

He looked at her, still watchfully quiet, then with a swift movement he bent forward and caught her wrists. His voice was suddenly hoarse.

"You shall not go free to love him again—to go to him. Do you think I could live so near you without learning to know you—to love you as he never could? You shall not go, for I love you, Therese, I—myself—differently now—terribly—as I never loved you before. I almost respect you—I am half afraid of you—yet, Allah! You shall learn to give me your soul as well!"

With a cry she sought to ward off his outstretched arms, the horrible, hated pressure of his lips against hers.

"Let me go free," she said; then very low, as she stood rigid under his embrace, "let me go—"

For answer he stretched out his hand to a panel in the silk-hung wall, and instantly the room seemed to fill with shadows, and a sudden, heavy, sickening perfume stole stiflingly across her face.

She feebly tried to move—then her limbs were numb. She seemed to herself to be lying on a gray cliff on the edge of the world, where a breath too deeply drawn would hurl her over.

She was slipping—slipping—then a whirl of snowflakes seemed to smother her into unconsciousness.

lessness and mental stress, to enter a little wine shop in a dusky side street in Montmartre. He had never set foot there before, yet the simple action changed in an hour the present course of his life and determined for him its end.

For more than a fortnight the sudden and mysterious disappearance of the singer who was known as La Belle Therese had been exciting the Paris mind. The great audiences whom she had delighted murmured and grew impatient.

It was said of course that Murad Bey, Prince of Kalama, knew her exact whereabouts. Yet he contrived to give the lie to this suspicion by appearing as usual in his accustomed haunts, and when business of importance finally called him to Constantinople it was ascertained that the singer was not with him, nor in his house in that city.

To Trevis the sinister silence which thus suddenly covered her, the thought of her danger in the hands of the polished and subtle barbarian who possessed her, was an agony.

As he sat in the little dark wine shop, with an untasted cognac at his elbow, he found himself listening to the voices of two men on the other side of the wooden partition which partly divided the alcove where he sat from the small, smoky back room beyond.

He thought he recognized in one of the voices that of Constantine Keshani, a picture dealer. The other was distinctly French and strange to him.

"He is mad over her—mad," said the voice of the Greek, "madder than ever before. He will never let her go—he never meant to—"

He checked himself abruptly, but the other laughed lightly with a note of derision.

"What chance he had, that barbarian! She is an angel of loveliness, and when one looks at her one cannot understand. She has the eyes of a warrior who has a gaping wound under his tunic, and yet—fights on."

### XXIII

It is chance which makes destiny.

It was only chance which led Michael Trevis, after a day of rest-

He paused, and there was silence punctuated by the tinkle of glasses and the striking of a match. On the other side of the partition the artist leaned forward tensely, his hands grasping the sides of the rough deal table before him, his lips dry and rigid.

After a moment the voice of Keshani resumed, so low that he caught only a word or phrase here and there.

"It is my belief that he never thought that other capable of such achievement . . . a remarkable creative genius . . . I know—and you—we both helped to make him when he said the word . . . thought he would be only a drawing-room success, with a passing vogue . . . He is a master and is hated for it . . . Murad . . . Bey . . ."

There was a pause, again terminated by the Frenchman. "And *she*—what is the mystery about her? I have never known. I did what I was paid to do, but in the dark. Yet there is a mystery, everybody knows that only to look at her. Come—I am discretion's self."

There was the sound of the scraping backward of a chair, and Keshani's voice came unmistakably to the listener.

"Do you think he tells his secrets to those who serve him? No, *mon ami*, no. He told me only as much as was necessary to the part I played in the furtherance of his schemes—no more; and that much I dare not repeat, for he holds me in the hollow of his hand.

"What I suspect, what I have discovered! Ah, that is another matter; but that also I do not repeat; not unless it be to net him where he can do no further harm—or for money—much more money than he gives me as the price of silence."

Followed—a noise of feet upon the floor, the sound of rising, the voice of a waiter.

Putting a coin upon the table, Trevis quitted the place hastily, yet once outside proceeded at a leisurely pace. In a few minutes he saw the

two men emerge and part, the Frenchman diving into a side street, where he disappeared, while the Greek turned his steps slowly down toward the Seine.

The artist walked on for some distance, then making a detour turned back and met Keshani face to face with well acted surprise and pleasure, though he was still very pale and his tongue felt dry and hot as he uttered his greeting.

Keshani seemed delighted at the encounter. He had evidently been looking unwisely and too well upon the grape, and insisted, on learning that Trevis had not breakfasted, that he should be his guest at a well known restaurant on the other side of the river. But Trevis had no mind and no appetite at that moment for the publicity and clatter of such a meal. He had something to learn from the man before him, and as he swallowed hard to relieve the dry tightness in his throat, and covered his refusal with a smile, he realized that he would learn it soon or late, though he should choke it with his bare hands out of the swarthy throat and crafty lips of the man before him.

He turned and strolled along by his side, offering a cigarette, touching idly in his desultory talk on this thing and on that; finally disclosing the scheme of a new picture upon which he was at work and inviting the Greek to pass upon its probable merits with his far-seeing, picture dealer's eye, and incidentally to breakfast in his own apartments in the Boulevard St. Germain.

"My man is a wonder at impromptu meals *à la fourchette*," he said, turning to hail a passing *fiacre*. "I often tire of the restaurants or other people's houses and dine in my own rooms. His salads are nothing less than artistic. Don't refuse."

But Keshani, who had heard of, though owing to Trevis's instinctive and unexplained distrust never shared, the culinary wonders of the tiny, painted dining room in the Boulevard St. Germain, had no intention of refusing. He entered the carriage with

a pleasant feeling of flattery, and on his arrival viewed the blocking in of the fresh canvas, and the various small studies made for it, with enthusiasm, while the soft moving servitor brought him sherry and bitters, and then disappeared to the mysteries of his unrivaled *omelette aux champignons*.

When the meal was served in the small dining room oval-paneled in the misty greens of forest and sea Trevis himself had painted, Keshani was in as brilliant a humor as even his volatile nature had ever known.

Yet the man, with all his gay comradeship, his apparent frankness, was in reality as impenetrable as though masked.

He drank in response to Trevis's invitations continuously, but lightly. It would not have been easy to imagine him, and any secret which he might hold, as becoming the mouth-piece of wine; and however deeply he might appear to revel, there was a watchful something in him which guarded the inmost door of his thoughts like an armed genius of silence.

Trevis, who twice during the meal had introduced the subject of the singer's disappearance and her connection with Prince Kalama, found his guest discursive—voluble—upon every other subject in the world, but upon those two—dumb.

He lighted a cigarette slowly, and sat for some time in silence, tapping the ash reflectively against the edge of his coffee cup, while the Greek continued a dissertation upon modern art.

Finally he looked up, speaking abruptly as one who has made a decision, and sweeping aside the other's conversation as he might have swept a cobweb.

"Keshani," he said, "I think you know more than you care to admit about the disappearance of the singer who is known as La Belle Therese. You know more about me—about Murad Bey, than perhaps either he or I suspect. I hate Kalama; I loved the woman whom he has made so terribly well known, and I am ready to make terms with you—any terms—for the in-

formation which I know you to possess—and which I mean to have."

He leaned forward, his eyes steady upon the other's eyes, his face taking on more noticeably that look of sternness and iron hardness of purpose which had been so foreign to its youth.

Keshani paused in his rapid talk and looked at him appraisingly, his cigarette poised before his lips, his eyes suddenly watchful. He was startled, but the hand lying clenched on the table before him was steady.

"I admit nothing," he said slowly at length. "What proof have you of my knowledge of these things or, supposing for a moment that I do possess it, of what interest would it be to me to place it in your hands?"

Trevis, who had busied himself in lighting a fresh cigarette with a show of indifference which his English blood made at this crucial moment imperative, raised his eyes and looked at him steadily, striving to keep down the contempt and dislike of the man which had always lain latent in him until now.

"If you will permit me," he said finally, after that unwavering scrutiny, "I will recall to your mind certain words which I happened to overhear upon your own lips not an hour ago. You said that what you know, what you have discovered and suspect, you will not repeat unless to net to his death the man who employs you, and who holds you in the hollow of his hand, or for money—very much more money than he gives you as the price of your silence."

With a cry Keshani had sprung to his feet, his emotional Latin nature robbed for the moment of its mask and at the mercy of the cold Anglo-Saxon blood in the man before him.

The Greek leaned toward him over the table, gripping its edge.

"You have no proof, no witness," he said. In his face was fear, the fear of Murad Bey.

Trevis examined him a moment longer in silence, then with a decisive movement he pushed back his chair and also rose, confronting the other with a certain dignity which lent him

an air of command stronger than the Greek had ever seen in him before.

"You misunderstand me," he said. "I am simply offering you more for what you know than Murad Bey offers you for silence. Will you answer my questions for so much?"

Constantine Keshani slid back into his chair, his shoulders hunched, his hands gripping its arms.

"For—for how much?" he asked. He ran his tongue over his dry lips to moisten them.

Trevis looked at him calmly.

"For the price of the 'Lilith,'" he answered slowly.

Keshani started at the words, his eyes incredulous.

"You cannot mean—for the entire price which France has paid you for the picture? Impossible!"

For answer Trevis wrote a cheque, tore it from its book and laid it before Keshani.

"There is the entire amount," he said. "If you can tell me the whereabouts of this woman, who has so mysteriously disappeared; if you can tell me anything about her connection with Murad Bey, it is yours. And most of all, I wish to know why it was that you helped to make me when *he* said the word."

He paused, looking keenly into the other's face. After a while the Greek put out a covetous hand and laid it upon the portion of the paper which Trevis's finger left exposed, and his own fingers closed upon its edge.

"I will tell you what I know," he said, "but you will wish all your life that you had died before you heard it."

Trevis started, and his eyes hardened, but he made no further motion, while he put the question that had trembled on his lips so long.

"Why did she—Therese—" He could not finish the sentence. The mere voicing of the fact seemed to choke him.

Keshani looked at him again with that same fleeting expression of pity; then his fingers tightened on the money.

"You mean why did she become the

—plaything—of such a man as Murad Bey? Listen, then. Do you remember a certain night when you wandered about Paris, starving and beaten, your last few francs gone at play—mad with absinthe and fever?"

Trevis nodded his head; he could not speak.

"On that night you believed that you were ruined; and you would have died either from the fever that had come from exposure and privation or by your own hand. When you went back half dying to your studio on that night I was near you; and to put my fingers on the money which had been promised me, I sent two messages. The matter was nothing to me—I was paid to report certain movements of certain people. I am not responsible. Also when I had sent the messages I remained, and secretly informed myself further. That was my own affair—"

Trevis moistened his lips, that seemed to move with difficulty. The hand that had held the money relaxed and fell to his side.

"Of course," he said mechanically. "And the messages—where did you send them?"

His tone was strangely quiet, but the relaxed hand clenched slowly at his side.

Keshani's eyes shifted.

"I sent one," he answered deliberately, "to the girl who was known as Therese—but I did not know then for what purpose it was sent. The other was to Murad Bey."

There was a little silence for a moment, then he went on.

"She came to the studio in answer to it, and found you choking with pneumonia, and with a loaded revolver dropped near you. While she was there Murad Bey came—"

"Yes—and then—"

Trevis was leaning forward. His hand had closed upon Keshani's shoulder, as though he would shake the words from him. The other waited a moment, then, it seemed as though with an effort, he cut through the dark curtain at a stroke.

"He swore he would leave you there to starve and die," he said in a low voice, "and in the almost impossible event of your recovery without proper care, to ruin you as an artist. He had the power and influence to do that, but if his influence had failed, he would still have done it—there are so many ways. You might quite suddenly have lost your eyesight, or your hand. You see, he is an Oriental."

He said the words quite simply, and for an instant he looked deep into Travis's eyes.

"Yet," he went on after a moment, "there was an alternative. He offered to make it possible for you to become what you are today—if she—"

Travis's hand closed upon his shoulder with a grip of steel; his face was ghastly.

"Oh, my God—my God!"

He had fallen into his chair, with his arms across the table and his face hidden upon them, when Keshani, crushing the cheque into his pocket, rose and looked down at him.

"You know the rest," he said; and for the moment the craft and greed were gone out of the lines of his face, and a reflection of pity and of the dignity and pathos of another's life rested there. "La Therese has died a thousand deaths for you. I was only a puppet—and the money I gave you for your first pictures was his—paid for by her in the agony of her body and her soul. Afterward—well—you rose above yourself—you became a man. And you can still strike a blow for your honor and hers, and for *me*. He has sent her to Constantinople—and he followed her there a week ago."

Then very quietly he left the room, and went out to the stairway, closing the door softly behind him.

#### XXIV

It was late evening in the higher hills of North Albania, which crouch under the ever rising slopes of the Biskassi. To the right the nearer mountains had already assumed a cold and dark ap-

pearance where the red rays of the sun had withdrawn from their deep defiles, leaving the weird bleakness and desolation of an Arctic twilight. But far away the towering peaks that piled themselves, crag on crag of sullen granite, into the darkening heavens were touched with flaming fire from the now invisible sun.

On the slope of one of the lower hills a mountain hut sheltered itself against the bosom of the ice-sheathed earth. At the open door, kneeling on a rush mat on the hard dirt floor, an Arnaut girl was grinding maize in a stone mill.

Behind her a fire of sticks burned upon the open floor, its smoke thickening the atmosphere and finding its way out through a hole in the low roof. Near it were some stone jars for oil and wine, a small copper coffee jug, some wooden bowls, a brass lamp and a number of rush mats and wooden stools. In a farther corner, where a dark woollen curtain hung, half parted to show some rude pallets, an old woman was conversing in low tones with a gaunt mountaineer. Crouched over the fire were two others, their weather-stained sashes of red cloth bristling with old-fashioned inlaid pistols and keen-bladed knives.

Outside, under the stars which were beginning to pierce the heavens with their cold white points of light, a man was wandering restlessly up and down in the keen wind which was beginning to rise out of the heart of the mountains. Unlike the Albanian guides and mountaineers about him, he was dressed in rough, dark cloth, with long boots reaching to his hips. In the leather belt about his waist was thrust only a slender Italian knife; but as he walked he kept his hand in the pocket of his coat, where a revolver lay concealed, of a pattern and deadliness unknown to the Arnaut. His head was bared to the cold wind; and in the fading light his dark face looked as hard as iron as he gazed out at the distant mountains like a man who seeks to pierce them by the mere force of his will, and see beyond.

Somewhere among those mist-clad



and towering peaks he knew there rose, as invincible as the granite upon which it was built, the stone fortress of Kalama.

It was only a fortnight ago that Michael Trevis had left Paris behind him in the cold sparkle of a winter's dawn, realizing that for him who has known love and yet missed happiness the rest of life—its comings and its goings—its strivings and its pleasures—is but a dance of shadows.

The red had gone from the tops of the mountains and the vast skies were black and starry when he turned once more toward the hut in answer to the summons of his Arnaut guide. This man, Hamdi by name, Trevis had picked up in Scutari, where the Albanian had presented himself in the character of mountain guide. Trevis, attracted by the man's personality, and amused by his fluent command of a mongrel tongue, half Italian and half French, had taken him into his service. A day after in a street brawl, brought about by Hamdi's celebration of the event in floods of *raki*, Trevis had been the means of saving his life in the teeth of the ruffling tribesman who had picked the quarrel.

True to his Albanian character and traditions, Hamdi had vowed eternal fidelity to his employer and rescuer, with that singular gratitude of the Arnaut, who will face and endure death for a friend.

He was a magnificent specimen of his race; and as Trevis followed him across the boulder-strewn space intervening between them and the fire-lighted interior of the hut he admired afresh the man's towering height, which overtopped his own, his mighty shoulders and thin flanks in their tight, braided trousers and coat, confined by a wide red sash, in which was thrust a whole armament of knives and pistols. Under his round close cap his bronzed, high-featured face seemed to reflect the composure and the savagery of the mountains among which he had been bred.

Within the hut the women had pre-

pared a meal of goat's meat, with flat cakes of bread, and honey, the whole to be washed down with a thin wine.

When the meal was disposed of Trevis lay for a long time among his rugs, staring with sleepless eyes into the glowing ashes of the fire.

Across his inner vision there drifted, dream-like, the dreadful moment of Constantine Keshani's revelation in the studio in Paris and his own subsequent departure for Constantinople. He remembered his fruitless watching before the barred doors of Kalama's house in the old quarter of the town, his fruitless bribes to the porter, who actually knew nothing of his master's movements, the wasting of the precious days and hours of Therese's already wasted life.

Then one day in the Bazaar an old woman had jostled him with a whispered word. He followed her to a quiet street, where blank white walls rose on either side. She knew a little English, a little French. He learned that she was an old servitor in the house of Murad Bey, that he had been there only a week ago with the Frankish woman, and that she knew whither he had taken her. She would tell—for a price.

He paid the price, and learned that Therese had been carried to the mountain fortress of Kalama in Albania.

He turned his back on Constantinople as he had on Paris; only, instead of the sparkling dawn that he had seen for the last time rising over the gay French city, he now looked back upon a flaming sunset which colored the heights of Pera and the gilded domes of palace and of mosque and turned to shining pink the blue waters of Marmora and the Bosphorus. On the Galata Bridge there pushed forward that endless throng of humanity—priests and soldiers, dervishes and pashas, porters, potentates and peddlers; Arab, Jew, Circassian, Nubian, Turk and European—which had passed thus long before he came and still would pass unheeding long after he should have departed.

But his only instinct now was to press on—on . . .

When he thought of Kalama his lips whitened and his fingers stiffened with the desire to kill.

For only thus might he grasp again at self-respect and hold up his head again with honor.

When he thought of Therese—of her moral whiteness and the bitterness of her life; when he thought of his own desertion of her at the smile of a woman who, however apparently innocent, was yet a courtesan at heart, he sounded the very depths of self-contempt. Yet, sometimes, through the bitterness of his own self-accusation there came a faint gleam of happiness in the thought of the strange compensation, which made the picture for whose ultimate achieving she had given herself body and soul; the price of this own self-condemnation, his own awakening to awed love for her in the knowledge of her illimitable devotion and sacrifice; his own opportunity to make some pale restitution by himself sacrificing fame and fortune and even life itself in rescue and in vengeance.

Here in this rude Albanian hut in the heart of a mountainous and almost untraveled country, with snow thick upon the higher peaks and each ravine and mountain pass to be traversed threatening death from some hostile Arnaut rifle, life seemed very real and stern, the existence he had left like a distant dream never to be dreamed again.

He had built up his masterpiece slowly, stone by stone, as the kings of old Egypt built the Pyramids, and the slaves who had toiled in its building were such ambition, such pain, such desire and such despair as have gone to the building of all the great monuments of the world.

And life had given him after all the dreams and all the passions, all the fret and the fame, the suffering and the achievement, no more than this: the knapsack upon his shoulder, the rifle in his hand, the hostile, endless mountains before him to be faced—and at the end all the dreams of his heart, the hopes of his youth which he had

thought to grasp still unattained—still like a distant star shining always beyond his reach—still to be sought and sought.

In the solitude of that remote place, with the embers dying upon the gloom and the north wind rising higher and higher in wailing gusts, there came upon him a strange, dim prescience of ultimate disaster and a sense of the irrevocableness of life.

Why did men prate of Future and of Fate? As he looked upon the ruin of his own life which he himself had wrought, and upon the ruin and despair which passion and egotism might bring to lives wholly innocent, he knew that man himself is his own Future and his own Fate no less than in a measure the Future and the Fate of those about him, even to the most remote.

Yet men, like children at the great Loom, with passionate and willful hands tangle the threads of the vast fabric of Life and Destiny, until it seems as though God Himself could not untie the knots.

## XXV

It was gray and cold in Northern Albania, with long days of bitter winds and driving sleet. Yet, when the days were fine, the outlook from Kalama was inexpressibly grand in its bleak solitude.

The great fortress, gray as the stone upon which it was built, stood on a ledge in the steep mountain side, whose rough spurs and boulders were sheathed in a shining mail of ice, and below its vast terrace, which swept to the very edge of the sheer descent, the pines stood dark and close-ranked, with snow upon their broad boughs.

Within the castle there were long stone passages whose only light came from torches of pine thrust into iron sconces and rings high up on the walls. An arched stone entrance terminated the rocky pass which led up the mountain side, and opening from it was a huge room with an earth floor, in the center of which a log fire

burned. Here horses were stabled, and the ragged Albanian retainers and guard ate and slept, smoked and threw dice over their *raki*.

Above, opening doorless upon the stone stairway, were bleak, shadowy rooms whose high, narrow windows were hung with oiled skins. In some of these, however, the present lord of Kalama had introduced a barbaric luxury. Wide divans of embroidered stuffs circled the walls, the cold stone of the floors was covered with skins and silken rugs, and the few furnishings were of hammered brass and silver.

The fortress of Kalama had been built eight centuries before by the first Prince of Kalama, Achmet Pasha, who was a Turk. He had governed an entire province of the ancient Illyria, and in his somber eyrie among the rocks he had held absolute sway over peasantry and lawless mountain tribe alike. Subsequent princes had ruled and died in the rude barbarism of the times until George Castrioti, the beloved Scanderbeg, King of Albania, had risen to free his country from the Turk. The far-reaching power of the Princes of Kalama was thus broken; and when Turkish rule again made itself felt on the death of the patriot their power was limited to the fortress and the lands which belonged to it. As these lands were only a few acres of stony cliffside and perilous mountain pass, the Kalama would have fared meagerly had they not already piled up fabulous riches and acquired much royal favor at the court of the Sultan.

But for all their wealth, the old castle remained unchanged, rarely visited except in midsummer by its owner, and at all other times, when the gray north winds screamed about its walls, a mere hostelry for the servants who kept it, for an occasional traveler and for the fierce Arnaut tribesmen and bandits, whose home was in the mountain huts and rocky caves of the cliffs.

Here, on a day in the end of February—a day when even the leaden, snow-laden sky was obscured by a flying drift of torn black clouds—the Frankish

woman whom Murad Bey had brought there a month ago, and who answered shrinking when his voice called "Therese," was seated alone in one of the upper rooms by a glowing brazier. Her seat was a low one, formed by a pile of red woolen cushions, and under her feet was a leopard skin that spread its black and tawny length to the fire.

She was leaning a little forward, with hands loosely clasped, the wasted fingers fallen a little apart, as though too weak to even grasp themselves with firmness. She was dressed in the white wool worn by the Arnaut women, but without any of the embroideries and scarlet mantle which is a part of their costume. Instead, over the ivory-colored stuff of her dress she wore a long, loose coat of black fur, the sole remnant of luxury which she had brought into that lonely place with her.

On her face, lifted a little from the dark wrapping, the firelight fell broadly, showing mercilessly the hollows in the white cheeks, the weary eyes with the purple stains beneath them, the pale, drooping mouth. Suffering and experience are not a matter of the passing of many years, and a single day can change and age youth like a sudden frost in an April night.

Her beauty of the flesh, save that which lay in the splendor of her hair and eyes, was almost gone, but through her worn face a spirit looked out that was like a white flame.

A great silence seemed to have fallen upon her life, as though she sat in a quiet room and listened to the surge of the world beating outside.

Often at night, when the wind dashed the sleet against the parchment windows of her room, her heart and mind seemed to slip away from that grim place, back to Paris streets and Paris scenes, and she saw a man with a dark, weary face and graying hair moving through existence, courted, brilliant, successful.

She was thinking of him now, with a tightness in her throat that hurt her.

If she could only see him once more; if only she could see him once more!

She got up presently and began to walk up and down the room, as though to still the pain in her heart. She felt weak, spiritually weak, for the first time, as though the stillness, the oblivion of her sacrifice had grown too heavy for her to bear alone; and her physical weakness was rousing in her an almost childish desire that the man she loved should not think evil of her any more, that though she never looked upon his face again he should at least know.

But he did not know, she thought; he would never know. In the stillness her heart, like some clamorous, insistent thing, cried out his name over and over again, so that unconsciously her lips formed the words aloud:

"Michael! Michael! Michael!"

Yet, though he stood before her now, she knew that she would still find the strength to keep silence.

After a little while she went restlessly to the door, then down the steep steps, along the deserted stone corridor and out onto the granite terrace which skirted the sheer edge of the cliff.

She was entirely at liberty day and night to come and go in the castle as she chose unwatched. Kalama had no fear of her escaping him now in those almost impassable snow-covered mountains, with their perilous ice-coated passes, where an infrequent *khan* or mountain hut filled with lawless and fierce Albanian bandits and mountaineers was the only resting place for miles together.

She went to the low stone parapet, walking almost feebly as though the invisible chain she dragged with her had become too heavy at last, and resting her hand on the rough stones, looked down. The pines, whose tops reached almost to her feet, were solemnly still, their dark green boughs showing richly through the frozen snow upon them. Here and there a huge and jagged rock thrust itself high through the dense growth like the fragment of some ruined tower. As far as the eye could reach, the mountains rose gray and silent to

meet the torn smoke-black scud drifting on the face of the gray and silent sky. Far off in the west a smear of blood-red light from the setting sun flung for a moment a wild and angry glow across the twilight, then was engulfed in the starless darkness of the advancing night.

Another day had passed; another night was unrolling its black curtain. She seemed to hear the dreadful procession of those days and nights—of those that had passed and those which were yet to come—marching with sullen footsteps up the mountain side, gaunt, gray figures with hideous, nightmare faces.

For a long while she walked backward and forward in the cold stone corridor, while from the great room under the stone arches below came the stamping of horses and the rough laughter of the Albanian guard gathered about the huge fire.

As she moved wearily back and forth there came a great trampling of horses and shouting of men outside, and a moment later Kalama entered accompanied by Ali Pasha, a neighboring potentate.

The woman in the corridor above watched them emerge from the great common room where they had left their horses and proceed toward a lower chamber where the flickering red lights of a huge fire danced out across the threshold.

The Pasha was a short man, deep-chested, of the true Turkish type. He wore a red fez and a uniform that had much gold lace and embroidery upon the breast and sleeves. In his sash was thrust a revolver without any ornamentation.

Murad Bey, towering above the Pasha, looked particularly tigerish, with his heavy, lithe movements, his tall figure wrapped in a magnificent cloak of sables. He, too, wore a scarlet fez, and on the forefinger of his right hand was a huge square emerald, engraved with the eagles and crown of the Kalama princes.

It seemed as though in this barren

place he delighted to assume a barbaric splendor, which had nothing in common with the unassuming simplicity he used in the Western world.

At the door of the room they were met by the Kaimakam of Mirdita, who, having attended to affairs of a personal nature in the district of Ljuma, on Murad Bey's pressing invitation was returning to the seat of his governorship at Pukah by way of Kalama.

Kalama left Ali Pasha in his charge, and with a whispered word turned and came up the stairs to where Therese stood looking down at him. She remained passive under his caress, although her beautiful eyes closed for a moment, as though to conceal the terrible look which leaped into them at his touch.

"*Ma belle*, does this icy corridor recommend itself more to your perversity than the fireside?" he asked, drawing her toward the door of the room she had left. "Warm yourself and drink some wine. Then go behind the carved screen in the gallery above the room where I sit at supper with Ali Pasha, and sing for us."

She faced him sharply. He had never before asked her to sing for any but himself.

"I cannot sing in this place," she said, measuring her glance with his as though it had been a sword. "I am your prisoner here, but I am not for that reason subject to the caprice of your command—to sing—to perform—at your pleasure—while you sup. You do not even make me afraid, Prince Kalama. There is nothing more that you can do except kill me, and life with you has taught me that death would be a kinder thing."

She turned away from him with a gesture of finality and of inexpressible contempt; but with an oath he caught her roughly by the arm so that she faced him once more.

"Allah!" he said hoarsely. "I will break you yet." He was trembling with the fury of his thwarted desires. "I will break you, though I kill him to do it. Do you think I like this place? I would go back with you to Paris to-

morrow if it were not for *him*—this man who deserted you, yet whom it seems you cannot forget. But he shall never touch you again, be sure of that. I—I—have loved you—would still love you as you cannot dream.

"Him I have made—I cannot unmake him now, but he can still die. Would you rather see him dead than to be more reasonable with me?"

On the instant at his words and the knowledge of his power her physical weakness seemed to drag down her hard-won spiritual fearlessness of him, and she gave a low, bitter cry, covering her face with her hands.

She knew that in open combat, or in a thousand secret, subtle ways it was in him to carry out his threat. Should she then at this hour turn back from the task to which she had set her hand?

When she looked up again her face was calm and resolved.

"Go back to Ali Pasha," she said. "I will sing for you when I have drunk a little wine. I—I—will try to be more reasonable—with you."

She turned and went back to the room where the cushioned seat had been rearranged beside the resplendent brazier, and some hot wine was brought her by the Arnaut women who attended her.

She drank a little of it, but could not still the shaking of her wasted hands. Then drawing her fur coat closely about her, she went through the icy corridors to the gallery, where behind a screen of carved and gilded wood she looked down upon the banqueting hall of Kalama.

Under the glow of the candles which replaced the flaring pine torches outside in the corridors, the Prince of Kalama sat, with Ali Pasha on the one hand and the Kaimakam of Mirdita on the other, all three luxuriating upon cushioned divans, while the ragged Arnaut retainers presented the trays of food to them, or busied themselves with the lighting and filling of the long-stemmed *narghiles* which stood at hand.

The smoke of these and the fumes of *raki* were ascending to the gallery when Therese stepped into it. In the

corner of the hall a man began to play a slow accompaniment on a sort of lute which he held against his breast.

As her voice rose, he followed it roughly with the wailing cadences of his rude instrument.

She scarcely knew what she would sing until, on looking down upon the scene below, a memory came to her, a poignant memory of early spring days in Paris when she had knocked at the door of Trevis's studio and in the words of an old song, called to him to open.

*"Ma chandelle est morte,  
Je n'ai plus de feu. —  
Ouvre moi ta porte,  
Pour l'amour de Dieu."*

The tears in her voice were wet upon her cheeks as the words died weakly away.

She felt that the flame of life was indeed burning very low, and of the first of the passions and the expectations of love there remained now but a spark.

There was silence in the room below as she finished. The Arnaut chieftain of Mirdita, who in his mountain village had never heard more than the rude chant of his Albanian tribesmen or the untutored crooning of some Arnaut girl behind her lattice, had risen to his feet, and stood looking upward in surprise and troubled delight. Ali Pasha, worldling and diplomat, gazing heavily-lidded into the depths of his coffee cup, allowed himself a secret smile of appreciation—and comprehension; but Murad Bey, when those desolate tones fell upon his ear, started up involuntarily, the stem of his *narghile* slipping from his hand, his face half shamed, half awed.

But Therese had not remained to see his look.

With swift hunted feet she went back to the silence of her own room. For the first time she felt that she had not the courage for another night, another awakening to the icy dawn, and the passionate temptation to self-destruction which had come upon her for the first time that day had grown into this moment of poignant revolt and dreadful resolve.

She crossed swiftly to a corner of the room where a wooden chest stood

against the wall, and dropping on her knees before it, began to throw back the linens and woolen stuffs which it contained. Near the bottom—thrust there hurriedly one day—she knew there was a small dagger taken from the stand of arms in the banquetting room below. She had secreted it at the time with some vague idea of a moment of personal defense.

Now, in her momentary madness, she saw in it only the means of release from this intolerable ache of longing and despair.

As her fingers groped in search of the ivory-hilted weapon, the chill of metal suddenly touched her hand, and with a strange, arrested sensation of recoil, she drew from among the folds of linen, not the dagger she sought, but the little silver locket, inclosing an ivory miniature, which Trevis had long ago given her to wear about her throat.

In the first bitterness of his desertion she had torn it off and thrust it away. Since then she had never trusted herself to look at it. Now as she opened it and saw his eyes looking back to her as they looked in the first days of their exquisite, undimmed companionship, a great wave of grief and love broke over her, and with terrible, rending weeping, washed away the darkness in her soul.

As though Trevis himself had laid his hand on hers and whispered, "Stop!" the hard, fierce revolt and determination to self-destruction melted and were gone.

In a moment of final renunciation, but with a dawning knowledge that the service of her life had been like a lamp held up in the dark for another's guidance—that love, though it rose from the very dust of earth, should yet stand white and triumphant through sacrifice and pain, she bowed her head, and for the first time in many bitter months she prayed.

## XXVI

THE snow had ceased to fall an hour ago and between the drifting vaporous



masses of the parting clouds the stars were beginning to look down upon the vast night scene and the frowning walls of Kalama, whose high, slitlike windows glowed flame-colored.

From the common room came loud laughter, the neigh of a horse, the clatter of men eating and drinking. Then a young, sweet, tenor voice rose in a snatch of song.

Somewhere within the walls of the fortress a deep-toned bell sounded eleven strokes. After a time the noise in the common room died gradually away, and the red light of the torches sank, as one by one they spluttered out, until only the candles from a single lower casement opening onto the great stone terrace flamed whitely against the night.

When the fortress was still—as still as the illimitable, cloud-burdened sky stretching black and starry to the stark confines of the snow-piled crags—the long lighted window opening onto the terrace was pushed softly back and Kalama's silent prisoner came out into the glittering, icy night.

She stood by the parapet for a long time, and the moon thrust an edge of silver through the snow-swollen clouds, pouring a white rain of light upon the still figure.

To the eyes of the man, who during the earlier night had painfully crawled and clambered upward on the almost sheer, pine-studded ascent below the terrace to the comparative safety of the rail near which he now crouched, she looked a spirit.

His very dreams had never fashioned the face of Therese into such fleshless beauty as he now saw in the face of the woman before him.

As she turned toward him he rose swiftly from his concealment, and going to her knelt at her feet, his hands grasping the folds of her dress, his face upraised.

For a moment of silence she bent toward him, looking into his eyes, her hand on his shoulder.

"Michael!" she said huskily at length, and then again, in a sharper tone of long pent agony and longing: "Michael,

Michael, I have wanted you so. Oh, God! I have wanted you so!"

And as he rose she clung to him sobbing, but without tears.

Trevis held her to him closely for a long moment, his lips on hers, and in that instant the grief and bitterness faded from both their hearts and a peace as deep as the night around them came upon their souls. Separation, suffering, shame were annihilated in that kiss. Through long darkness they had met at last, and clinging lip to lip, the night seemed gone and the morning near.

The woman was trembling when at length she unclosed her eyes and loosened his arms about her. But a faint new life seemed to have flowered in her face.

"You know?" she asked. "Is that why you came?"

And he answered:

"Yes, I know, and I would have come through hell to get you. Therese, don't you know that I would rather have died by my own hand, or in poverty and sickness, than that you should have been crucified to give me my ambition?"

For a moment she covered her face with her hands. She thought it had been almost worth it—to have attained heaven at last.

Love is at once an angel and a demon, the most pure and the most base of the passions of men, and from the very trough of the beasts it can still arise to touch the stars.

When she dropped her hands from her eyes and looked at him again the white light of exquisite heights seemed to beat upon her upturned face.

"My dear," she said slowly, as though she groped for the words; "my dear, I was nothing, you see, and you were a great genius. I was glad to give up my life in exchange for yours, when that was the only way to make it possible that you should give your masterpiece, your monument to the world. It was like the Pyramids. Hundreds of insignificant lives were sacrificed to make them, and they live forever."

She went nearer to him and laid her

arms closely about his neck, pressing her face, her lips against the rough cloth of his coat in an ecstasy, an agony of suddenly awakened hope and passion.

"Always believe that I loved you, Michael," she whispered. "Loved you so much that if I died I should still wait for you between the worlds, though it should be for a thousand years."

She lifted her face again to his long caress, like a parched creature who drinks deep of the very waters of life. Then suddenly, looking back over her shoulder in terror toward the lighted room she had left, she pushed him from her.

"I had forgotten," she said breathlessly. "Michael—go now—Kalama is there; he must not see you—come away—come away—"

For answer Trevis put his arm more closely about her and drew her to the parapet.

"We will go together," he said quietly. "And when you are in safety I shall come back and take my chance with Murad Bey. I think," he said softly, "that I shall kill him."

On the very verge they stood a moment looking down the sheer plunge of the dark mountain side matted with the tough interlacing boughs of its pines, and doubly wrapped in darkness, for now the moon had withdrawn her shining face behind the snow-burdened clouds.

"Come," he said, and with the words a sudden sharp prescience of danger made him turn his head.

In the open doorway of the lighted room stood Murad Bey with the revolver in his uplifted hand, taking cold aim.

For that century-long instant Trevis noted even the huge emerald on the forefinger that pressed the trigger, and in the same moment—as the sharp whiplike crack of the weapon came to his ears—he sprang forward upon his enemy.

The fierce impact of his body bore Kalama backward to the ground, jerking the revolver from his hand, to send it hurtling over the cliff side,

where the clamor of its fall woke a thousand distant echoes. But the Turk had regained his footing almost at a bound, and dragged his antagonist in his savage grip to the terrace's utmost verge.

For a breathless space, as they fought for the perilous, slippery footing, each striving to cast the other over the cliff, Trevis told himself that this was the end at last.

But for a moment only; for with the thought there came upon him a madness of fury that stiffened his relaxing muscles as though he had drunk the very elixir of hate, and it surged suddenly like molten metal through his veins.

With a mighty effort he wrenched one arm loose from Kalama's tearing fingers, and as quick as light had drawn the knife from his belt, raised it high for the downward stroke and plunged it deep.

Too late the Turk—whose own frenzied hands had fought for possession of the weapon as he tottered with his assailant upon the brink—realized that for him the pomps and prides of life, the lust of the spirit and the flesh, had in a flash grown far off and infinitely small, while close upon him the unknown stretched forth a pale, immutable hand to pluck him downward into awful depths.

He reeled, beating at fate with his outflung arms, then, evil to the last, with a huge, ultimate effort as he swung outward into space, his relaxing hold tightened and he sought to drag his antagonist with him as he fell. Trevis fought madly to release himself from that half-inanimate, down-dragging weight.

But the eyes of love are quick to see, and Therese, more swift even than Kalama's hatred, now that her moment had come, threw herself upon Trevis as he staggered on the great terrace's very edge, twining her arms about him, and drew him back to safety while her eyes held Kalama's for an instant it seemed almost with a smile.

As he clove the air in his dreadful fall the man looked upward for the last

time and saw her standing there in the moonlight, her arms close clasped about the man she loved, and to his dying senses it was as though a shining and invincible presence from immeasurable heights looked down upon him with stern triumph.

About them, as they stood alone for an instant in the moon-swept night, the whole fortress was astir. Lights sprang from window to window and footsteps rang in the stone corridors.

Trevis turned to the woman in his arms and pointed downward to the sheer pine-studded slope of the mountain beneath their feet.

"There is no other way now," he said. "Are you afraid?"

"No," she answered. "For you are here."

Unseen they set their feet upon the perilous descent, and into the waning night melted like shadows; while the long north wind rose and drove the snow clouds back again across the pale crystal of the dawn.

Far up among the wild and rugged mountains of Albania, as far as an eagle's flight above the green and vine-clad slopes of the lower hills, stands a monastery which faces the setting sun.

At a little distance from the shelter of its rough hewn walls a mountaineer's hut has been built, with deep casements hewn from a shell of jutting stone and a roof of moss and thatch. In summer the wind whispers softly about its narrow windows and at evening the sunbeams enter at the open door in long, pale spears of light. In winter icicles hang their hoary heads over the stone casements, and the snow, borne on the north wind whose voice seems

never still, falls softly all day long and through the unending night.

Here the world is forgotten. Here in this half-unknown corner of the earth the puny strivings, the warring weariness of men seem to the dweller in peace but as the faint moan of a distant sea—to those who mark the sunrise and the stars, as only a little thing, with which they are glad to have done.

For peace has come at last to the man and the woman, who in the gracious shadow of a mighty and protective religion, which has at once sheltered and united them, watch day by day through their deep hewn windows the vast pageant\* of the setting sun, the granite silence of the deep gashed cliffs.

Often as they stand together looking out across the valley to the blue horizon, where leagues away in a distant sun-steeped city a great picture hangs in an echoing gallery, and the careless, pleasure seeking throngs come to gaze upon its deathless and terrible beauty, the woman looks wistfully at the man with eyes which see no further than his face, and asks:

"Do you never long to go back where so much of life is still waiting for you?"

But his kiss upon her lips is the only answer she craves, and it is enough.

To the souls that great suffering or great sin have cast adrift on a dark sea the pageant of existence seems a long way off—and to these two prisoners of life, who have groped alone through a world of shadows to meet at last, hope and love itself have blossomed like the wonder flower in the desert of their souls.



**DO** some men a favor and they will do you two. Do some other men a favor and they will do you twice.

# A PAQUIN JACKET

By ANNE WARNER

"IT has just come. It is up in my room—I had just lifted it out when your card came." She was looking up in his face and smiling. "It is so pretty, quite the prettiest little jacket you ever saw."

"I had a beastly time getting here," he interrupted moodily. He was a moody man with a square jaw. He was so moody and his jaw was so square that her sunshiny smile and dimples suited him exactly. "I had to get up at four and be driven six miles," he went on, "and—"

"But I was talking about my jacket," she interrupted pleasantly. "It's just pongee silk, but it's cut—"

"You've no idea how sharp it was, that drive across the moors," he interrupted. "I never took such a drive before. The wind was like a knife. There isn't but one person in the world that I would have endured such—"

"Oh, I'll tell you," she said hastily, but still smiling brightly; "I'll get my new jacket and we'll go for a walk. It's so cool that I can wear it. I shouldn't like to carry it, because that would wrinkle it, but—"

"No, we won't go for a walk," said the man savagely; "we'll sit right here and I'll say what I came to say. I may as well know the worst. I've got to get it out of my mind somehow. And here is the place."

"You look rather fagged," the blond man said solicitously. It was later in the day now, and he was a very blond man—so blond that her black lashes and olive skin suited him exactly. "Have you been going too fast?"

"No," she said, smiling. "Captain

Belknap was here all the morning, and I wanted to walk and he wouldn't walk, so I'm just a bit short on fresh air, that's all."

"Do you want to walk?" asked the blond man. "Oh, please don't say that you do. It's not a nice day; the sun's hot and the wind's cold, and it's so long since we've had a visit. And besides, there's something I—"

She looked at him in a quick, deprecatory way. "Oh, but I do want to walk," she said, and then her courage got the better of her fright and dimples bubbled forth. "You see, I have a jacket—a new one—a new one from Paquin's, and I want to wear it dreadfully. It's so pretty and the day is just right for it. I don't want to carry it at all, because I wouldn't get creases in it for—"

"Sacrifice the jacket to me," said the blond man. "I never asked a favor of you before—did I? Please."

"But I want—" she began.

"I want something, too," he interrupted, "and I want it terribly. Let me—"

"But I want to walk," she cried in great agitation, "and I want to go right away now. I want to get my jacket—"

But they did not go to walk, and she did not get her jacket. The blond man stayed her steps and said his say.

A little before tea another man came in. He was not blond and he was not agitated. His jaw was not especially square, either—but it was plenty square enough. He was a big man—so big that her littleness suited him exactly.

"What is the matter?" he asked in attentive astonishment, seeing plainly that something was gone wrong.

She was rather pale, but she could smile still.

"I've been wanting to walk in the park all day," she said, "but no one would take me."

"I'll take you," said the not-blond man. "Get your hat at once."

"I think that I will get a jacket, too," she said. "It looks cool outside."

She went upstairs and came back with her hat and the Paquin jacket, neatly buttoned.

They went into the park and paced along sedately. There was no special conversation of any kind.

"I should think you'd be too warm," the man whose jaw was not especially square, but plenty square enough, said presently.

"I think that I am too warm, but I—" she began.

"Give me your jacket." He spoke authoritatively.

She stopped and took it off. He took it. She started to protest at the way in which he handled it, but it was already vised under his arm and the mischief was done.

"Watch the children," he said, walking on with a tread that trod the shades of Paquin into the dust. They looked at the little ones playing on the grass. While they were looking a sleeve fell out of the jacket's folds, and he replaced it with a force that was final. But she did not even notice.

They strolled on. Sometimes they talked and sometimes they didn't. Presently he clasped his hands behind him and held the jacket gripped between them in a sort of ball.

"I think the flowers are *so* lovely," she said.

He took a fresh twist on the jacket. "It's prettier than Hyde Park," he said.

They went over the bridge.

"It's beautiful today," she remarked.

"It's perfect," he rejoined.

They stopped by the pickets to watch the ducks.

"I can't rest my elbows on the pickets," she said.

"No," he said, "you can't, can you?" Then a bright thought seized him. He rolled the jacket up tightly and made a cushion of it to cover the pickets.

She rested her elbows on it without comment.

"There are two ducks," she said. "Let's see where they go. Perhaps it is an omen."

"They'll stay together because they are mates," he said.

"Then it isn't an omen," she said.

He lit a cigarette with the calmness that dissolves omens into thin air. After a while they went on.

"The joy of being with you," she said, "is that it's just pleasant to be with you. We don't have to be frantically entertaining one another every minute."

She turned at that, and the jacket cushion, thoughtlessly released, went over into the water.

"Oh, by Jove!" he cried.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," she said. "It was an old one, anyhow," and she laughed.

"Was it really?" he said. "And when you came down I thought it looked rather fresh."

"That is just because you are a man," she declared, looking up at him, with a sort of lying that is better and braver than truth in her eyes. "Men never know anything."

"I suppose not," he laughed.

She laughed too.

There was sunlight in their dual laughter—sunlight, warmth and joy.

The man with the square jaw was on his way to Leeds. The man with the blond hair was at Ranelagh. The two ducks—still together—were inspecting the jacket.

"It's an old thing," said the gentleman duck.

"No, it's quite new," said the lady duck.

"Well, is it worth anything?" he asked, for he was a practical duck.

"Yes, it will be warm and serviceable to help make a nest," said the lady duck. "Help me home with it, dear."

# THE DEBTOR

By GERTRUDE KING

PERCIVAL KIRTLEY was a child of five when the great War broke out. The news of the Emancipation was nearly a month in reaching Kirtley's Crossing, but its effect came quick. One morning Judge Kirtley waited till nearly eight o'clock for his seven o'clock coffee, then he dressed sketchily and went downstairs and out to the kitchen. It was empty and the fireplace was cold. He crossed the back lawn to the "quarters." The little cabins were deserted; not a field hand nor house servant remained; only a forgotten baby cowered in a dark cabin corner, and a few old creatures, too feeble for the long road to the North, were left to whine at the sight of Ole Marse's angry face and shaking cane.

Judge Kirtley went back to the house and told his wife, and she cried. After that, it seemed to Percival, she was always crying, till one day she was shown how little it really matters that you have to dust your own parlors and mend your own shabby frocks. The three old men were not enough to carry her coffin, light as it was, so Mam Liza, Percival's old nurse, had to help, while Judge Kirtley, in a faded blue coat—he could not afford mourning; and, after all, faded blue is a sadder color than black—walked behind, holding his son's hand in a cold, tight clasp, the tears drying unshed in his hot eyes. For a few weeks there was a raw brown scar of a mound in the plot under the sycamores, and then the grass grew over it and it was healed like the scar in Percival's heart.

For the boy soon had other things

to think about. One by one the old negroes died, and he had to learn to take their places in the garden and about the house. When all were gone a hired freewoman came to cook the few vegetables Percival could rear and the fish he caught. He grew up a little, neglected drudge, ignorant, sulky, fearing everything human for its strangeness, loving no one but his father.

The old Judge, never a very lovable man, was now less lovable than ever. He shut himself all day and half the night in his study to gnaw the bitterness of his sudden and hopeless poverty. He had had an idea of "earning a competence by his pen," a gentlemanly means of livelihood, but one from which he was soon dissuaded by the indifference of Yankee editors to his opinions on Shakespeare, Æschylus and Addison, an indifference expressed by courteous printed slips. But he worked on doggedly, even when money for postage was not to be had, fearing the reproach of idleness more than the warning of gauzy veils and red clouds, till one day the freewoman, coming to summon him to dinner, found him sunken in his chair, staring before him with vacant eyes, his lips moving in a moaning chant:

"I can't see! I can't see! I can't see!"

The freewoman and Percival helped him to his bed. A doctor was sent for, who first shook his head and then told the Judge to cheer up, that he must have brought it on himself, and that he ought to be thankful that his general health was so good. After the doctor had gone the Judge turned his



face to the wall and lay silent a long time. God knows what passed in the lonely heart, but it was He, no doubt, who sent Percival, the poor, shabby, awkward, overworked little Percival, to creep into his father's room and crouch sobbing beside the bed. The Judge heard at last, and putting out a shaking hand, felt over the forlorn heap for the boy's head.

"That you, Percival?"

The boy crept up on his father's bed and laid his warm young face against the white one on the pillow, and the two cried together, woman fashion.

Secretly, the boy soon knew a sweet, shameful feeling that was almost joy at his father's misfortune. As a dependent, the Judge became gentle, affectionate, even demonstrative. But he was a worn and broken man upon whose calloused neck duties pressed lightly. He left the boy the shabby drudge he had become; it did not occur to him to use the new leisure and companionship to share with his son the stores of his own well furnished mind. He even felt a slight contempt for the boy's ignorance. "At his age I was reading Theocritus," thought the Judge, forgetting that Theocritus is a good for which unprepared youth does not reach with eagerness. The boy himself was content, deeming learning to be the portion of gentlemen like his father; he had a quaint memory of ruffled shirts upon his father's breast, with which went the dry smell of tooled bindings. For himself, he was content to be nurse, housekeeper, gardener, everything that a single active heart and brain could be to keep the flickering flame of the Kirtley glory from dying out altogether.

But he was not without an innate cleverness. He had noticed that his father, who never left his bed, moped in his solitude and idleness. The Judge's blindness had come upon him too late to develop his other senses to that quickness which takes in some degree the place of sight, and he had no heart to find distraction in any painfully acquired pursuit. But he

was pitifully bored and lonely, and their neighbors were few and scattered, and with few exceptions they were too much racked by the need of finding the bare means of living to have time for friendly intercourse. And the Judge began to fret.

"It appears to me, Perce," he sighed one day, "that we've got into a damned backwater. Nobody thinks of us any more. And a backwater is no place for a Kirtley."

Percival, as he carried trays and bedded the potatoes, thought hard. The next morning, after he had helped his father shave, he asked to borrow the razor.

"What do *you* want with a razor?" grumbled the Judge. He was sitting propped up in bed, his worn face temporarily rosy, his sightless eyes wide open. A hot tear rolled down Percival's smooth cheek. He swallowed and blinked.

"Why, father, I'm some fuzzy for a party, I reckon."

The father's face lighted up. "A party? When? Where?"

"Tonight, over at Tillotson's," replied the unscrupulous Percival. "It's Gracie's birthday."

Now the Tillotsons were the magnets of the neighborhood. They had managed to save something out of the wreck of their fortunes, and they still went to New Orleans in the winter and Gracie Tillotson was sent to school in St. Louis. Since the downfall of the Kirtleys, who had always been "land poor and nigger rich," Kirtley's Crossing had been silent of the roll of the Tillotson carriage wheels, and the Judge had felt, and silently resented, this open defection. And now he was as elated as a child.

"My gracious, Perce, why didn't you tell me before? I'd have tried to scare up a new suit for you some way if I'd had to sell my watch! You could have had that blue dress coat of mine fixed up for you. I wouldn't have you go there looking like anything but a Kirtley."

"Oh, I reckon I got good clothes enough, father!" replied the sixteen-

year-old plotter. "And, anyhow, they were all so set on having me come they won't care what I wear."

"They ought to be!" growled the Judge. "Never was a time up to ten years ago when a Tillotson wouldn't ride his horse's hoofs off for a Kirtley! Well, boy, you go and look the best you can, and come in here before you go and tell me how you look." The Judge could never learn to talk of "seeing things"; his affliction was unsoftened by time.

At six o'clock Percival, attired in his shabby best, presented himself in his father's bedroom. He sat down on the bed and let the Judge's eager, trembling fingers feel him over. "Got on my watch? That's right, that's right! And some of that scent on your handkerchief that I bought your mother in New Orleans? You ought to put a flower in your buttonhole too. Got your coat with the velvet collar? Yes—my, but you're getting a big fellow across the shoulders, Percel! Well, go along and enjoy yourself, boy, and be sure to come in and tell me all about it when you get home."

"Yes, father."

The Judge's face was flushed and beaming; he was happy for the first time in four years. Percival, delighted, ran downstairs to enmesh the free-woman. "Caroline," he began cautiously, "you'll have to take father's tray up tonight."

"All right, Marse Perce."

"And, Caroline, I—I reckon father's getting kind of crazy; he's got the idea that I'm going to a party, so I fixed up this way to please him—and don't you say I ain't!"

"Don't you rile yo'self, Marse Perce; I won't say nuffin. But, my lan's, you cert'n'y do look pretty 'nough to go to a bobbycue er anywhuhs!"

Caroline thus bound, Percival went whistling down the avenue, whose gravel was long since hid under the encroaching grass, and as soon as he believed himself out of hearing of the Judge, he turned, sneaked back to the house, crept upstairs to his own room and dressed himself in his working

clothes to steal down again and grub in the garden patch till long after dark. As soon as his humble supper was eaten he set out on the road to Tillotson's. It was a good six miles, and seemed even longer after his hard day's work, but it was over at last, and at ten o'clock he stood under the splendid cottonwoods which guarded the stately old house from the prying gaze of wayfarers.

There was no party, but the parlors were brightly lighted; great oblongs of yellow radiance stretched down the lawn almost to where the lonely boy stood in hiding. The sound of a piano reached him; he could see that the player was a slim girl in a pale blue frock. Her face was turned from him, but he could mark the smooth curve of her cheek, the line of her white throat, the luxuriant tassel at the end of the thick braid which hung between her shoulders. A little white dog sat near her, and as she performed an especially tantalizing *arpeggio* he flung up his head, opened his little black mouth and yelped. Gracie Tillotson whirled round on the piano stool laughing and pointed a dainty slipper at him. He nipped it, then, rent by conscience, fled through a long window into the darkness. His mistress rose to follow him, still laughing, but a tall man came from somewhere and put an arm over her shoulders. "He did not hurt you, my darling?"

"Oh, no, father!" Gracie Tillotson stood on tiptoe to be kissed, then followed her pet out of the window.

The gracious intimacy of the scene made Percival's heart throb and his eyes burn. And what a girl! He had seen no beauty save that of the trees and sky and flowers; he had never dreamed that humanity could become anything so exquisite. It seemed to Percival that without knowing it he had been dying of thirst, and now, having looked upon Gracie Tillotson, he could never be thirsty again. Why, all he had to do was to close his eyes!

Something was yapping sharply at his feet; it was her little white dog. Percival's heart stood still with fear.

A cold sweat poured all over him; he could not even run. And, could he have run, it was now too late, for there close to him in the scented darkness stood Gracie Tillotson. He could faintly make out the line of her head and shoulders, and her frock was a pale blur against the trees.

The dog kept on barking, but Percival did not dare to stir.

"What is that?" demanded Gracie Tillotson in a clear little voice which tried in vain not to tremble. "Who are you? Were you going to steal my dog?"

"No—oh, no!" Percival managed to bring out huskily.

"What are you doing there?" persisted Gracie Tillotson. "And who are you anyway?"

"I was on my way to Clarksville—and I heard the music—and—and I just stopped—"

"Oh!" said the mollified Gracie. "Did you—did you—like it?"

"Like it!" gasped Percival.

The dog had stopped barking. The boy and girl had for the moment no more words. Major Tillotson's figure appeared in the brightness of the window. "Gracie—oh, Gracie!" he called.

"That's papa," explained Gracie. "I've got to go right in. But I'll play some more afterwards."

"Gracie—oh, Gracie!"

"Yes, papa!" Her lifted voice was the sweetest silvery pipe.

"Oh, wait—please, just a minute!" cried poor Percival. He saw redemption in this lovely little girl, and his pitiful words tumbled out pellmell. "I reckon you'll think I'm awful—but I *did* come here to steal. I've got—somebody—at home, sick, and he—the person—thinks a heap of roses, and we've got hardly any now—I've been kept so busy with the vegetables I didn't ever seem to have time for the flowers, and they've all got straggly and bushy, and—and—I meant to take some roses."

"Gracie—oh, Gracie! You come right in *this minute!*"

"Yes, papa, I'm coming!" This time Gracie snapped, ever so gently;

then her voice fell and softened. "You poor boy! Who is it that's sick? And what's your name?"

"Don't ask me—please don't," pleaded Percival.

Gracie Tillotson, aged fourteen, was already a lady. "Course I won't," she said sweetly—"not till you tell me. You come this way." She turned away among the cottonwoods, and Percival followed, cuddling in his arms the little white dog, who, having ascertained by the process of sniffing that he was a boy of whose acquaintance a dog might be proud, was wriggling ecstatically on his breast, making enthusiastic dabs at the boy's chin with a tiny warm tongue.

The Tillotson roses were famous. There was an especial one, a great tea rose, whose scented bloom drooped among bronze leaves; Percival had heard his father speak of it, and it was this which he had meant to rifle. Some sweet intuition made Gracie stop by the splendid bush. "I'll give you all you like of these. Have you got a knife?"

"I'll cut them," said Percival; "you'd hurt yourself."

"I'll hold them for you, then," said Gracie.

To Percival's dying day the scent of tea roses will wake in him a tingling sense of the beauty of life, of the goodness of things and of the loveliness of womanhood as embodied and shown forth in Gracie Tillotson.

"That's enough," said he, after he had gathered six or seven. "He—the person—will know they're from you—all's garden. I'm much obliged."

"You're very welcome," said Gracie with a child's grave politeness. But after that evening nobody ever called her "Little Gracie Tillotson."

"I reckon I'll go now," said Percival.

"I wish you'd have some more roses; we've such lots."

The boy shook his head, his eyes hot in the darkness. "Good night." In the simplicity of his worship he would not speak her name; as she gave him the roses, he tried not to touch her hand.

Gracie was dying to ask his name; she tricked herself by the pretext that she might "do something" for his mysterious invalid. But a dawning womanliness held her back. "Good night," she said gently. "If ever you want any more you just come and ask me."

The sweetness of her went through and through him like a flash of light or a stringed note. As Percival trudged the six miles homeward he was unconscious of fatigue or loneliness or poverty. He had seen a little girl in a blue frock and she had spoken to him with kindness. He did not even consciously wish to see her again; she had been for him; that was all.

Not till the next day did he know how tired and footsore he was. But, as he entered the gateway of Kirtley Place, the dim light from the window of his father's chamber shone upon the gate lurching ever open from one rusty hinge, and he was reminded that he must mend that gate, and so woke back into his weary world.

Not daring to trust himself on the creaking stair, he climbed a pillar of the back porch, crept into his room and redressed himself in his finery. Descending as he had entered, he ran round to the front of the house and made a noisy and dramatic entry at the front door. With a final effort of his weariness, he tramped up the stair and burst into his father's room.

"Well, father!" he cried, his tired voice shrill with what might easily be gaiety or wine, "I'm back! And I had the greatest old time you ever knew!"

"I reckon you did!" answered the Judge. "Tell me all about it."

"Oh, it was elegant!" said Percival, warming to his own festal fancy. "Such lots of candles and lamps! And we had cakes and custard and chicken salad—and you ought to 've seen the jellies!"

"Huh!" sneered the Judge. "I should have thought the Tillotsons would have had ice cream!"

"Well, wait, father! I was coming to that. Course we had it! I ate three plates."

"What kind was it?"

"All kinds—and—and Gorgonzola," answered this imaginative artist. Heaven alone knows where he had heard the word.

"Why—" began the Judge doubtfully.

"It's a new kind, father," said Percival hurriedly. "The Major said it was all the style in New Orleans." He checked an impulse to say that it was pale pink—it seemed too wild—adding, "And I had some wine, too."

"Better be careful about the wine, Perce."

"Oh, yes, father, I was. And the Granger girls—my, you ought to 've seen them! Miss Mary Granger's getting as handsome as she can be!"

"You young dog!" laughed the Judge sleepily. "Looking after the girls already, are you? How is Gracie Tillotson growing up? She used to be a mighty pretty little one."

A dumbness had Percival all at once by the throat. "Oh, she's—she's—" he floundered helplessly; even to his father he could not speak of Gracie Tillotson. "Mrs. Tillotson sent you some roses," he finished abruptly.

The Judge caught at the scented cluster and held it against his face. "Oh, that's good!" he murmured. "My, but that's good! I'd know the smell of those Tillotson roses anywhere. That was kind and thoughtful of Mrs. Tillotson. You send her over a basket of roses the first thing in the morning, Perce—don't forget now!"

"No, father." The tired boy wondered dully what the Judge would say if he knew that Kirtley Place boasted a hundred pods of wax beans for every rosebud.

"You're tired out, ain't you, sonny boy?" said the Judge tenderly. "Danced yourself most to death, I reckon! Run along to bed now and tell me the rest in the morning. But put my roses in water first."

Percival obeyed, dragging his leaden feet. He stumbled back to the bed and bent over to kiss his father good night. Weary as he was, the mischief of boyhood flamed up in him. "Say,

father, what do you think—I kissed Mary Granger! I think I'll ask her to be engaged to me!"

"You young dog!"

Percival meant to lie awake, painting upon the darkness the image of a girl in a pale blue frock, with a thick black braid hanging between her slim shoulders. Instead he lay like a log until the dawn.

He did not speak with Gracie Tillotson again for six years, but he began at once to lead a life of feverish gaiety. He went to a party every week, and between times he called on Mary Granger and the Bushrod girls and Lola Sheppard and Hazel and Idalia Timley. His festal garments grew shabby from constant putting on and off long before he outgrew them; what chiefly troubled him was the fear that the Judge should think it necessary to return the lavish hospitality of which his son was the recipient. But, growing swiftly old and weak, the Judge likewise grew simple; he was happy enough just to lie still and hear the tale of Percival's social triumphs.

The boy developed a marvelous invention. The *chronique scandaleuse* of Kirby County had never been so fascinating. "Great Scott!" the old Judge sometimes grumbled. "If I could only get around again and see how things are waking up! Or if they'd only drop in here! Say, Perce, what d'you suppose has become of the Major anyway?" But the old man feebly accepted Percival's explanations—bad roads, the county fair, the races, the court in session at Clarksville; when these seemed stale he had no hesitation in killing off an acquaintance—nay, even a dear friend or a prominent citizen. At one time he had plunged the county into so universal a sorrow that the Judge began to be anxious lest the climate of the neighborhood had undergone a deterioration, and Percival found himself pledged to six grains of quinine a day.

The Judge was now too old and broken a man to worry long about anything. It was plain to Percival that only his constant care and unflagging

ingenuity kept the feeble life within his father's body. The kindly neighbors began to revive the Judge's interest in life by presents, purchased by the sale of Percival's vegetables, which he carried to the Clarksville market in a clumsy, homemade wheelbarrow. Beholding him thus reduced to the level of the free negro and the poor white peddlers, the Grangers and the Tillotsons and the Bushrods and the rest of the gentry passed him by with averted faces. Even Gracie did not fling a second glance to the degenerate, the outcast young Kirtley.

No Christian martyr awaited the onslaught of hungry beast or brutal gladiator with a more steadfast, patient courage than that which dwelt in Percival's breast as he stood silent over his cabbages and watched Gracie drive by, radiant in a filmy white frock, her cheeks softly flushed by the summer's warmth, her dark eyes luminous under her flowered hat. She drove herself, Northern fashion, in a basket phaeton, and the slight, clear movements of her delicate wrists charmed Percival like the song of birds. In his youth and strength he worshiped Gracie Tillotson; the silence and the hope were both the test and the pledge of him. Beside the image of the sweet pale child among the cottonwoods there was no place for either debauchery or despair.

Meanwhile his father congratulated him as the betrothed of Mary Granger. "The Grangers are nice people, Perce; never was one of them that wasn't a gentleman and a brave man—unless she was a lady and a good wife! But what's become of that little Tillotson girl? She was a sweet little thing."

Percival mumbled that it was time for his father's glass of port.

"The only thing I want," chuckled the warmed and exhilarated Judge, "is that you have the first christening in my room—eh, Perce?"

Percival did not answer. If his father had demanded a wedding, he was prepared to annihilate Mary Granger without a qualm.

As Percival approached his twenty-second birthday it was evident that his

first great sorrow was drawing very near. The Judge daily grew weaker; he could no longer endure to be propped up in bed, but lay down upon his pillows, as white as they. Percival called in a doctor, that terribly costly Northern doctor who could do so little. The doctor shook his head at the white old face and thereafter he came every day. The visits had to be paid for, and Percival borrowed a mule and an apology for a cart from a free negro and began to cart away the heavy, old-fashioned furniture, emptying the ground floor room by room.

The Judge, hearing unwonted noises, began to question. "My goodness, father, you ought to know that the place has got to be cleared up some time! I can't bring Mary into a house that her own mother said hadn't had a regular cleaning up since ma died! Why, you won't know it downstairs when I get through! I've sent all the old things up to Clarksville to be polished and all fixed up."

"Did the General come over along with Mrs. Granger? I'd like to have had him come upstairs a little while," suggested the Judge feebly.

"Well, father, the fact is you were asleep," Percival explained, "and the doctor said you weren't ever to be waked up when you're asleep. But wait till the Grangers get back from New Orleans and then we'll see!"

Winter came on. Percival had no more vegetables, and Clarksville would not pay much for secondhand furniture. He began to sell the worn silverware—it was as good as new in that the monogram and crest were worn off by nearly a century of polishing. He kept only enough to furnish his father's tray; the rest went to provide the little luxuries to which the old and the sick have a right. The Judge had his port, his sweetbreads, his delicate fruits; his bed was laid with the finest of linen and his room was fragrant with flowers, while Percival and Caroline lived on short rations of corn bread and bacon.

The Northern doctor had eyes, and he hinted to Percival that the payment of his visits need not be forthcoming

too soon; he would gladly wait for his money, or even would go without it altogether. Percival thanked him and paid him. "I reckon," said he to himself, "father would break my head if he thought that I ever let a Kirtley get in debt to a Yankee."

One damp and dreary day in February Percival found himself at the end of his resources. He had nothing more to sell—he was not even free to sell himself and his own strength. And that was the day on which the doctor beckoned him out of the Judge's room. Percival, knowing what he was to hear, softly closed the door.

"I wanted to tell you, Mr. Kirtley, that it's pretty nearly over with your father."

The hall landing began to go round and round Percival; his lips were dry and his forehead grew tight and he felt a kindly hand under his elbow. "How long—d'you think—" he faltered.

"A very few days—surely not more than a week. But he won't suffer. Oh, Mr. Kirtley, don't take it so hard—"

Percival felt the universe closing in—and he had not time to fight it out, for the Judge's feeble voice rose in a wail: "Perce—oh, Perce!"

"Yes, father." The blank eyes were spared the misery of the gray young face. "What is it, father?"

"I'm so uncomfortable, Perce; the pillow's all worn down!"

Percival took the sightless gray head on his arm and plumped up the pillow. The Judge gave a sigh of relief. "Lord Almighty, Perce, but you've got to be a regular old woman nurse! What am I going to do when you're married?"

"Married?" stammered Perce, coming stupidly up to the surface of things.

"You'll want to spend all your time with Mary then! But you've been a good boy, Perce, a mighty good boy. My, I'm looking to the time when you have boys of your own! I'll tell you what I want—we'll have the christening here, in this very room! We'll have an altar and we'll get the Bishop, and—and—" His voice failed him and he closed his eyes, a smile upon his face.



"Of course we will, father!" said Percival. "He'll be called after you—William Percival Stanley Kirtley! Now you be quiet till I get your port."

It was the last glass of the last bottle. A faint color came into the old man's face, and he nestled against his pillows with a murmur of comfort.

"Now you go to sleep," Percival commanded. "If you get too lively I won't have you for godfather!" The Judge smiled and slipped down for a doze. Percival drew the covers close up over the shrunken chest and arranged the little table beside the bed. "I'm going out a while, father. If you ring, Caroline will come. I've got to go to the Bushrods' and thank Mrs. Bushrod for the quail, and I reckon I'll stop for dinner at the Grangers'. Don't you dare miss me!"

"All right, Perce," murmured his father sleepily.

Percival lingered a moment looking down at the white old face, and then went downstairs whistling blithely. He entered the dismantled parlor, and closing the door gently after him, flung himself down upon the dusty floor, shaking with his sobs. "A week! A week!" he moaned over and over. For a black half-hour he wrestled with his grief in the empty room, then he rose, remembering that there was no more money and nothing more to sell.

He composed his shabby and disordered clothing into the semblance of decency, and set out on the road to the Tillotsons' mechanically, hardly knowing what he did. As he trudged, he cudgeled his weary brain without result; his mind was as bare as his house. He was half starved, almost in rags, humbled and worn by the burden of his terrible youth; but he gave no thought to himself. He thought only of a gentle old man, white as linen; a dying old man, whose last hours were not to be troubled by sordidness, hunger or tears.

He prayed to a strange, distant Deity that he might "find a purse or something." It did not occur to him to ask for a help which no doubt would have been readily granted. His neighbors

had become but the creatures of his dreams, not to be called into the hard reality of his life.

Something fluttered above him, past him. For a moment he fancied that it might be Gracie Tillotson on her little brown mare, her hair loosened, her cheeks flushed; it was only a flock of birds flying northward, their timed, serious cries sounding remote, inevitable. Yet the spring was coming. Percival flung out his arms with a long, moaning cry.

He was trudging aimlessly past the Tillotsons' meadow land, and Fancy, Gracie's little mare, believing that every human creature was born to a rich inheritance of sugar, thrust her pretty head over the fence and whinnied at him. Percival was fond of animals, and he stopped to pet her; as she rubbed her velvet nose against his shabby shoulder the dreadful thought came into his mind that this beautiful, dainty creature was worth many times the sum he needed—for, after all, it would not take much to buy enough wine and flowers and dainties to last for a week.

His need was so urgent, the opportunity so apt, he himself so worn and frantic, that he did not know he was being tempted; it seemed only a providence for his necessity. He caught Fancy's halter in one hand while he noiselessly let down the bars with the other and led her out into the road. She scented an escapade and began to dance with delight, so that it was hard to hold her while he put up the bars again. But it was done at last, and he leaped on her bare back and galloped down the Clarksville road.

It was easy to dispose of her. She was better known than he imagined, but he asked an absurdly low price and soon obtained it, and Fancy was hid in a shabby stable in a side street, whence it would be easy to smuggle her to the great city. "I reckon," reflected Percival, "there won't anybody guess it was me till after the end of the week."

It was late in the afternoon when, laden with his lavish purchases, he entered the kitchen where Caroline sat

nodding before the great fireplace. "My lan's, Marse Perce, if you ain' been gone a time!"

"I've been to town. Father's things were pretty near out. You'd better cook these sweetbreads for him right away. And, Caroline, you've been real good to father and me—I've brought you something." There were a shawl, thick, soft, brightly plaided, and a pair of earrings. Caroline went into ecstasies and poor Percival tasted for the first time the joy of gratitude. "I don't believe," he reflected, "that they'll take things like that away from a poor old nigger even when they do come to find it out!"

The next day but one was hard on the Judge. It rained, and the bare branches of the trees creaked wearily and rapped at his chamber windows as if they were beckoning away the old man's flickering soul. He was restless and talkative, inclined to be a little fretful, and Percival's ingenuity was sorely taxed to keep him amused. In the course of the afternoon Jim Tilotson took to heavy drinking, and Gerald Benham's attentions to Pink Bushrod became so marked that her father forbade him the house.

Toward night it cleared, and, as the last rays of the pale winter sunlight straggled through the breaking clouds, the Judge grew calmer. Percival saw that the end was very near. The boy's eyes were burning with unshed tears, but his voice was steady. "I reckon you get right tired of the pillows sometimes, don't you, father?" he asked, slipping an arm under the old man's wasted body.

"What a good boy you are, Percel!" murmured the Judge. "I *am* tired." He closed his eyes and was silent. His expression slowly changed, its fretful senility giving way to a calm, intent, questioning look, the more earnest for the unseeing eyes. "Perce," said he, "what did the doctor tell you this morning about me?"

"Don't you feel well, father?"

"I feel kind of queer."

"It's because you're hungry, maybe; you'll feel better after your supper."

"No, it's not that. I feel so—so light, somehow. What did the doctor say?"

Percival was silent; for the first time in six years a lie stuck in his poor throat. All the rest had not seemed like lying, but this was different.

His silence was his answer. "I know," said the Judge presently. "My time is up."

"No, no!" cried Percival wildly. "He never said anything of the kind, father! Don't think anything like that!"

The Judge checked him by a gesture full of authority. "Never mind, my boy; it's right I should know. I reckon it'll be all over in a very little while now—it's come upon me so suddenly. Why, Perce—Perce—don't, dear—don't!" For his son's long courage had broken down, and he was sobbing like a girl on his father's breast. "I want to tell you something," the old man went on, his hand on the young brown head. "I haven't been a good father to you—yes, let me say it; I've thought only about myself, and I've been cross and grumpy at being left alone up here—as if anybody could be blamed for not coming to see a stupid, blind old man. But you've made it very bright for me, Perce, my boy, and I'm glad that I won't be leaving you alone—that you've plenty of good friends, and that you'll soon have your own wife—that the best of your life is before you, my dear, dear boy! Now lift me up a little, please, and I think I can sleep—a little."

He drowsed in his son's arms, sometimes muttering words that could not be caught. The boy's tears were dried now; his gentle breathing did not disturb the fitful, waning rest of the dying man. The sun went down and the shadows grew thick about them. There was no need for lighting candles in that room where one man abode in unchanging night and the other was quick and deft as a wild creature bred in the darkness of the woods.

Suddenly, after an hour or two had passed, Percival was startled by his father's voice; loud and clear it was,

the voice of a young, strong man. "You've been a good boy, Perce, a good boy—" Soon as the words had left his lips the Judge fully knew how good his son had been.

Percival laid the frail old body gently down and kissed the lined forehead. He threw more wood on the fire, and by its light deftly and reverently did what was to be done. Then he sat down beside the smooth white bed and dropped his face into his hands. For the first time he felt how rough and coarsened these hands were, and he hoped that his father had never been annoyed, disgusted, by his hands.

He sat so for a long time, while Caroline moved briskly about downstairs, setting things in prim evening order. She did not worry because Percival did not come down either for his father's supper or his own. The Judge's appetite had lately been capricious, and Percival's meal time came when he had nothing else to do. After a while she shut the kitchen door behind her and went singing down the narrow path to her shack in the deserted "quarters":

"Dar' tuh be a Danyull—"

Beyond the pious impression that "Danyull" was "somebody in the Bible," Percival was not in any way acquainted with the theme of Caroline's ballad. But he dully told himself that a Daniel was another of the things he was never to be. He was only Percival Kirtley, orphan—and horse thief. That appalling fact kept coming back to him, and he could only hope that as "they" had not, so far, troubled him, "they" would keep away till the next afternoon. That would give him time to dig the grave—

What was that? Caroline's distant hymning gave place to a shrill shriek, followed by another and another, growing louder and more piercing as she fled back to the house.

"Marse Perce, Marse Perce! You git away—you run!"

"They" had found out.

As Percival looked out over the neglected lawn it began to be alive with dark figures, flitting nearer in the broken glare of torches. He heard

hoarse shouts, and made out his own name accompanied by a varied phrasing of the theme that he was a condemned and infinitely blasted and shamefully begotten horse thief. There was soon a mighty clamor of knocking at the great front doors.

Percival shivered. He was no hero and he was worn out. For the moment he was beset by a delirium whose besetting idea was a dread lest his father should be disturbed and alarmed. He began to talk wildly to deaf ears. "Now, listen here, father, and I'll tell you what it's about. Just listen—it's—it's a sort of demonstration, father, that's what it is! All the leading men of Clarksville—I knew all along they were coming, but I didn't want to say anything about it—I just wanted to give you a surprise! Why, father, guess what! They want me to run for the Legislature! That's a right smart showing for a pickaninny my size, ain't it, father? Hear them calling, 'Percival Kirtley!' I hope you're pleased, father. I won't do it if you don't like— Good God!"

The front doors had fallen in with a crash. "They" swarmed into the house, their heavy boots stamping on the bare floors, their shouts and hooting echoing through the empty rooms.

Percival bent and kissed his father's cheek, now grown icy cold. It was a man who left the silent room and stood at the head of the wide stairway, looking down upon the hot, pushing, cursing mob. "Gentlemen," said Percival Kirtley, "I beg of you not to make such a noise."

Silence fell. Percival came, slowly and unfaltering, down the stair into the glare of the torches. He was unshaven, gaunt, pale, almost in rags, but his eyes were clear and straight-gazing.

"I'll go with you," he said; "only please don't make such a noise." Though he dreaded leaving his father alone, he could not speak to these strangers of the reason for silence.

Someone flung out a sneer, and the clamor began again. He was seized by a dozen hands, hustled, knocked

about, kicked; they pushed him toward the open doorway.

A voice, clear, authoritative, rose from without the house. "Stop there—you!" It was a voice which roused shapeless memories in Percival's racked brain. A man, tall, elderly, dignified, made his way through the crowd, which parted to give him room. The sweat stood in beads on his knotted forehead; his face was flushed, his eyes were angry.

"Gentlemen," he broke out, "is this the justice of Kirby County? Is this another 'lynching party' for the Northern newspapers to shame us with? Have you no respect for your own people—your own honor?"

Percival remembered now; it was Major Tillotson. But the words fell dully on his ears, for as the mob fell back against him another figure made its way from the veranda into the torchlit hall, the figure of a woman, a girl.

Gracie Tillotson's habit was splashed with mud; her hair was whipped into roughness by the soft spring wind; her cheeks were flushed with excitement and hard riding, and she had lost her hat. She slipped a slim hand into her father's arm and faced the mob with a scorn equal to his own.

"You-all ought to be ashamed of yourselves!" she cried out. "I reckon Fancy was *my* horse, wasn't she? And I'll thank you to let me take care of my own affairs, you—you—" She stopped, breathless, and her father patted her little, hot, clutching hand.

"Gracie, Gracie—you shouldn't have come," he whispered.

"I don't care—she's *my* horse!" persisted the indomitable Miss Tillotson. The mob sulked, wavered.

"Now you-all just go home!"

It is a brave cohort that dares defy

a girl. Muttering, hot-cheeked, with dropped eyes, the zealous executors of the justice of Kirby County faded away. In a few minutes the hall was empty save for Major Tillotson, Gracie, Percival and Caroline, who crouched sobbing and muffled in a corner. Percival had not moved nor spoken. His head was throbbing; his heart beat very queerly. If he had been asked how he felt he could only have said, "Very tired."

Major Tillotson slipped an arm over Gracie's shoulders. "Now, dear, we can go home. It's safe to leave him."

Gracie's eyes were on Percival's pale face. "Father," said she, "he's not well."

Percival swayed, lurched, fell down, his arms about Gracie Tillotson's knees, his face against her skirt. "Oh, Gracie—oh, Gracie—"

It was the first time he had spoken since she had come into the hall, and Gracie Tillotson turned red and white and red again, and her eyes swam in memory. "Father," said Gracie, "I want to speak to Mr. Kirtley—alone."

Major Tillotson went to the sobbing Caroline and shook her by the shoulders. "Get up, you—show me where there's a fire."

Half an hour later Gracie Tillotson came into the kitchen where her father sat smoking under the sniffing gloom of Caroline's presence. Under wet lashes Gracie's eyes shone star-like.

"Father," said she, "we'll go home now. But I want you to come back and bring Mr. Kirtley to stay with us for a while—after—after—" The tears welled and fell.

"Darling—what is it?"

"Hush," said Gracie Tillotson. "I'll tell you all about it when we get home. He's had a very hard time."



**T**ELL the truth and it makes it embarrassing for others; tell a lie and it makes it embarrassing for yourself.

# A PAGE FROM A PESSIMIST'S JOURNAL

By REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

**T**HE girl you think most of is the girl whom you should have sent a present, but forgot.

Eternal vigilance used to be the price of liberty, but nowadays everything is going up.

The woman who is a man hater is generally a woman who knows few men well enough to hate them.

When you say she has an uncertain temper, you mean she has a certain temper.

A great many women believe everything a man says and suspect everything he does.

Many a woman with a voice like a bell soon makes you wish the clapper had been omitted.

Why is it that the woman who is always giving somebody "a piece of her mind" never exhausts the roast?

Some men are proud because they have made a name, and some because they have married one.

The woman who removes her hat at the theater is not the woman with a scant supply of hair.

There is only one way to win an argument with a girl: usurp at once the role of the injured party.

It was wounded vanity that made this girl refuse you, but the girl you married has proper pride.

The most ordinary woman can see through the cleverest man better than the cleverest woman in the world.

Did Rip Van Winkle really meet the gnomes—or had his wife told him she would be down in a minute?

The secret that a woman wants most to know is the one that, when known, she is sure will break her heart.

She who takes pleasure in trampling a man in the dust is always disappointed if the man doesn't come back to be brushed off.

One of the puzzles of education is why some girls study a foreign language when they already talk too much in their own.

Make a girl believe that you are a dragon; then make her believe she has charmed the dragon into harmlessness, and in one day more she will marry you.

# BOUQUETS FOR THE AUTHOR

By MARY C. FRANCIS

**B**ROTHER JACK: "Couldn't make head or tail of it. What do you write stuff like that for?"

BROTHER DICK: "Tried to read it last Thursday night, when I had that awful cold. Had a couple of hot toddies, and the first thing I knew I was asleep. Nothing like a good dope when you need it."

SISTER JANE: "I read part of it the other day, and I could tell right away that I would have written it in an entirely different way. Why don't you ever make the hero marry the right woman?"

SISTER BESS: "Mercy! If you had four children, as I have, you wouldn't be wasting your time reading anybody's stories. Why on earth don't you get married?"

AUNT BELINDA: "I stopped reading your stories years ago, because I don't approve of them. I wish you'd do something practical and respectable. Why don't you open a delicatessen shop?"

AUNT POLLY: "Nobody can write real stories nowadays, but if I were you

I'd try to write at least one really good one, just to show that I could."

A FRIEND: "No, I didn't have time. Say, did you see that ripping good thing by Gwen Brown? *She* can write! Awfully good style! So distinctive! I wouldn't care to write at all unless I could do good stuff like that."

ANOTHER FRIEND: "Did you ever read Guy de Maupassant? There's so much a short story writer might learn from him—style, and that sort of thing. I only care for the best myself."

MY SMALL NIECE: "Mamma says one scribbler in the family is enough. Say, auntie, does your typewriter really do your thinking for you? Papa says so."

A GENUINE ADMIRER: "Hello, Lady Mary! I read your last story the other evening. Say, why don't you cut loose and write a hummer! Honestly, I believe you could."

A CRITIC: "Punk."

ANOTHER CRITIC: "Rot."

THE AUTHOR: "If the good Lord will forgive me for learning to read and write in this life, I'll never do it again."



## VESTALS

By ROBALIE ARTHUR

**A**S Vestals in the days of old  
Tended their sacred flame,  
So I keep bright a radiant light  
That shines upon your name.



# THE CORNER OF LOST OPPORTUNITIES

By ELIZABETH DEJEANS

"A H!" She spoke it slowly, lingeringly, as if her surprise had continued and merged into the succeeding emotion, and she stood as still as if carved in stone. Breton, in his feverish hour of accomplishment, had foreseen the change of expression that accompanied her single ejaculation, but he had not been prepared for the intense feeling that slowly dilated her eyes and drew the color from her cheek. He had meant to pain her, but he had not intended a brutality, and had he raised his hand to strike her, the shrinking pain of her expression could not have been more vivid.

She stood before her portrait for a long time silent, and as he watched her he realized even more fully than he had before her entrance how exceedingly well he had done his work. He had transferred to his canvas the elusive charm that in the breathing woman showed in the changing green hazel of the heavily lashed eyes, the coming and going color of her cheek, and the softly piled masses of hair, dusky or bronze-tinted, answering in turn to the shadow or sunshine that touched it. He had captured the elusive and held it in the somber brow and the veiled softness of the eyes that seemed almost to change and darken as one gazed, but he had also emphasized the distinctly tangible, the wholly animal appeal of the full scarlet mouth with its slight lift of the upper lip. It would seem as if the man had used every art of delicate interpretation he possessed in revealing the noble meaning of brow

and eyes, and then deliberately placed as a blot upon his fair handiwork the wholly sensual beauty of that scarlet mouth. He had made its appeal so vividly apparent that it overshadowed any other meaning the face might have; it desecrated every other feature. It was grotesque, cruel.

He could only guess at her thoughts from the slowly setting mask that covered entirely the warm pleasure every feature had expressed when she had first entered his studio and greeted him; she had said nothing after that single exclamation, and he knew her well enough to predict that she would not speak in sudden anger, and would ask her question only when she was ready.

She turned at last slowly, her eyes lowered and her cheek still pale. "I see you have not been idle during my absence," she said in her cool, dry tones. "I congratulate you. I hardly expected such progress." As she walked from the portrait she unclasped the fastening of her long fur-lined cloak, and Breton sprang to catch it before it should trail its length on the floor. "Thank you," she said, without looking at him; "it is warm here."

She dropped into a low cushioned seat, and crossing one knee over the other and resting her elbow on it, her chin in her hand, she looked up at him. It would have been an awkward position in another woman, but she did it gracefully, as she did everything, the long lines of her superb figure lending themselves easily to every pose. Her wide hat dropped away somewhat from

her lifted face, its heavy plumes resting on her shoulders, and her full lips twitched into an expression that was hardly a smile. "I am up only for a day," she said in the manner of one who is simply speaking to fill an interval. "They will be clamoring for me by dinner time, but I will have to confess that my curiosity, pricked by my vanity, was too much for me. I wanted to see what new charms you had added to my portrait. And you—I understand now why you would not join us. You had more amusement at your command here."

"I don't think you do understand my reason," he answered quietly, "nor do I flatter myself I was much missed. If I am to believe all I hear, your house party has been a gay one—too gay for me." He stood before her, leaning against the back of a high Colonial chair, and his usually expressive aquiline face wore a somewhat set look; his long dark eyes narrowed and observant.

She studied the determined carelessness of his attitude for a moment and her face changed and softened. "Why did you do it, my friend?" she asked. "Do you play with your portraits, secretly amusing yourself by seeing what an exaggeration may do to a face, what evil that lies hidden in the soul you can stamp upon the features for your own private entertainment, and then, when you have gloated sufficiently over your discovery, simply wipe it away with a sweep of your brush and paint the face as the world in general sees it? You must have many a laugh up your sleeve. Did I come unexpectedly upon your play this afternoon?"

"You are ingenious," he returned, "but you forget that you are my friend, that I have owed much of my success to you. I would be incapable of doing what you have suggested. There is something unnatural, revolting, in the thought—like a goblin twisting the features of the insensible into an evil meaning and chuckling over it."

She raised herself a little and pointed.

"What do you call that thing on the easel, then?" she asked.

The dull color flushed his face and she saw the muscle in his cheek twitch as he spoke. "I did it in anger," he said, "an uncontrollable fit of rage; but when I had done it and cooled down I left it purposely as it was."

"Why?"

"I meant you to see it."

"But *why*?"

"Because I had decided that you should not make one in my corner of lost opportunities."

"You choose to speak in riddles," she retorted. Her cheeks were not pale now, and her eyes had widened and darkened as she gazed up at him, the scarlet lips, whose meaning he had coarsened in the portrait, half parted in a smile.

He met her look fairly, questioningly, as if gauging a possibility; then his eyes sought the rug at his feet, his brow gathering in a frown that more fully expressed itself in the slight lift of his shoulders.

She rose quickly from her low seat and laid her hand on his arm. "Bretton, don't you trust me enough to tell me what it is?" she asked. "Why were you angry—and what is it you are afraid to say?" Her voice was soft and appealing, but he stood unmoved, and her tone changed and hardened perceptibly. "There is your conception of me. There is nothing subtle about that female—it's certainly not she you are doubtful of?"

He looked up quickly. "But it is," he said. "It is that side of you—the other I could count on. I want to ask you for something that means more to me than anything else on earth. My art that you have done so much to make a financial success, all these wealthy people that your efforts have brought to my door—it is nothing, nothing at all to the thing I want you to grant me!"

"Ah!" she said again. As she stood beside him her face had changed, answering to her many quick thoughts, but a puzzled wonder was uppermost. Still the hope, the wish that would

read a meaning in his words that might meet the craving of the unsatisfied emotion within her, was too strong to be dismissed. He was blind—had always been blind. What was there she would not do for him?—he had always asked so little!

She sat down in her former position, her face lifted. "Go on," she said; "half truths are worse than none. Have I ever failed you in my friendship?"

"No," he answered, his eyes lighting, "but this is different. I am not asking this because of your friendship. I am asking it for the sake of another woman, and for your sake, the fine and good woman that I know is in you."

"But it means everything to you?"

"When I have told you, you will understand about me," he returned. "It's just a simple story and dull, according to your highly seasoned view of life, but it's been the only part of me that's worth anything. I wouldn't think of troubling you with it, but you hold the key to the situation, and I come to you on my knees. You know something of my boyhood—what a struggle I had to get enough to eat while I worked, first here in New York, and then in Paris, then back here again. I saw the usual things and went the way of the rest. Nothing mattered particularly but my work, and I had some success. Then early one spring I gave out, and I was warned that I must stop a while. If I must be idle, I had a preference for the spot in which to be so, and I packed my bag and started for it. You leave the railroad at a little stone station and you follow up the Cumberland Mountain coal road sitting in an empty coal car. You wind slowly round the wooded hillsides, and you see the little, foaming, hurrying river far below. They dropped me out at last on a steep hillside. 'Go up that path,' they told me, 'until you come to a big white house; they take boarders there in the summer.'"

The woman before him had suddenly dropped her hands to her knees and straightened herself, but his eyes had left her and were fixed on the window,

as if he were looking out upon the scene again.

"I was tired," he was saying, "and my bag was heavy, but as I climbed I would stop and look down. I came to a big flat rock that jutted out from the hillside, and I walked out on it and looked up the river for miles, deep into the throat of the gorge, for the hills came down almost sheer to the water's edge. There were huge boulders everywhere, jutting out from the hillsides, in the bed of the river, on the hilltops, standing like giants against the sky line, and over everything was the pale green of the little budding leaves. Far down below me the river swept round the bend into smoother water, and widened into a small lake made by the dam that crossed the river. Just below the dam I could see the mill and the handful of shanties clustered about it, and I couldn't help wondering how they had managed to find a strip of level earth along the water's edge wide enough to build upon. I climbed on and the sun dropped behind the ridge of hills opposite, but the light in the sky seen through the pale green tinted branches was so wonderful that I forgot my way in watching it; it was almost dark before I realized where I was. I was standing beside a huge rock that towered above me and I was lost. I looked down and then up and I gasped, for I seemed to be gazing into the face of a pixie, a little thing clinging to a cleft in the rock above me, just a tangle of black hair, a pair of great eyes, and a little pointed chin; it might have been a squirrel clinging there, only it was human.

"'I am lost,' I said at last. 'Can you show me the way? I want to go to the big white house where they keep boarders.' It made a queer little sound and slipped out of view, and I was making up my mind that I would never see it again, when it stood before me and pointed out the way. I saw then that she was a little, little girl, tiny and slender and elflike, 'This way,' she motioned, and moved like a bit of thistle down before me, up and up till the lights of the house shone

through the trees, and then I turned to thank her, but she was gone."

The woman had lifted her handkerchief to her lips and pressed it to them with a trembling hand, her eyes on the floor, and the artist's regard had come back to her.

"I never think of that hillside, and the sunset, and the river that I don't see the little elf-child," he said.

"I spent two months in the big white house that faced the sunset and looked down on the hurrying river. It was too early for the regular summer boarders, and there were just the three of us—an old man who rarely left his books and papers, his daughter, and myself. We climbed all over those green hills, the daughter and I; we gathered armfuls of dogwood and wild honeysuckle, and I found white violets and bloodroot lilies for her in the hollows. We made friends with the elf-child and she showed us her secrets, her little clay people and the rock caves where she hid them away. She would bring a handful of white clay from the river bank, her tiny fingers kneading and smoothing it, and in a moment it would be the head of my Little Lady, or mine, or her old grandmother's; she never made a mistake or failed to catch an expression. It was wonderful. Then I began to dream a dream of the thing I wanted more than I had ever wanted anything else in my life—I wanted to beg my Little Lady to love me and come with me, and we would take the elf-child from the half-witted old woman who kept her, and teach her fingers to do wonderful things. My dream possessed me; it became the whole of my life, but I hesitated—I have always hesitated—I have always seen so clearly the position of the other factor; and it has filled my life with useless regrets, that hesitation of mine. I argued that I had nothing to offer my Little Lady. Could I ask her to share my poverty? No, I must go back and work harder and succeed and then come for her.

"I came here then and worked and hoped through a long year, and you found me, and in a few short weeks I realized that I was on the road to suc-

cess. Then I went back to my Little Lady. I climbed the steep hill, but this time I was blind to the light in the budding branches; the spring was in my heart. She was there, more sweet and beautiful than I remembered her, and I laid every bit of love and adoration in me at her feet. It was hard for her to give me my answer, and she was gentle and kind, but I understood. Another had been before me who had youth and beauty and all the good and tempting things to offer her, and he had won my Little Lady.

"The spring was dead in me, and the light had gone out of my sky, and all I could do was to come away, but I did not forget the elf-child; everything was not valueless if I had her to work for. I went down the hill and stood on the narrow strip of land at the river side. It was wider now, and torn and washed in gullies; the dam was gone, the lake shrunken, and a few piles only marked the site of the mill, and some bits of river drift the places where the shanties stood. The mountain storms of the early spring had swollen the river in a night, and the wall of angry water had swept away the dam and the little village. Almost all had escaped in time, but the elf-child and the old woman had been swallowed up in the river. The fingers that molded the clay so wonderfully, and that in time would have done their marvels in marble—for the genius was there—had lost their opportunity, and I mine.

"I went to the little rock caves and collected all I could find—the wet of the winter had spared a few—and I brought them away with me." The woman's bent head was bent lower, and she breathed as in pain, and a look of compassion touched the artist's face. He went on gently: "I came back to my work and you accused me of being sad, my friend. I was, and indifferent as well, until a new thing came into my life. That big handsome boy brought my Little Lady here, within a few blocks of me, and I saw much of them and their happiness. Then you came into their lives—into his, and gradually it was destroyed." The compassion

had gone out of his eyes and they had narrowed again, meeting the heavy, half-wondering look she had raised to his. "I watched, and day by day I saw my Little Lady's cheek grow thinner and paler, and the light go out of her face. He spent every possible moment with you, fascinated, apparently lost to every other consideration, and you seemed to wish to show me how great was your power—why, I cannot conceive. You were having a bit of amusement, driven on by that restless spirit that torments you, and you were breaking her heart. She is only a child and you a woman with a lifetime of experience. Then you took him off to your house party with you, and you made it impossible for her to go—she was left at home to eat out her heart alone. I had seen it all without a word from her, but the other night she broke down and I had to listen, with no right to take her in my arms and comfort her as the man in me longed to do. I came up here then, burning and shaking, and I drew my brush across your smiling mouth and painted in that scarlet thing. I set my imagination to work out that worst side of you; then, when I had cooled, I made up my mind to leave it, to let you see how ugly a thing it was that you were letting conquer the good in you. There it stands; look at it!"

She turned her head slowly and gazed, and her eyes came back to him, still dull in their look of trouble. "And what you want of me is—" she began.

"To forego your bit of amusement—to send him back to his wife—to let that other part of you triumph—the part of you that I admire, that will keep me a loyal friend to you always."

She smiled a little wanly. "It is something," she said as if to herself, and sank into thought, her eyes on the rug at her feet. Presently she looked up with a subtle change of expression. Out of her strange eyes there suddenly peeped a gleam of malicious curiosity, a quick recoil from pain into an attitude that was cynical, provocative, a tentative presentation of a possibility. "I have considered, my friend, and de-

cided," she said. "Leave me to my 'bit of amusement,' and you go to your Little Lady and comfort her; she will learn the value of the substitute in time. I shall be doing you both a service."

She had risen and he straightened and faced her, white to the lips.

"To tempt me! Is that the best you can do for me?" he asked.

"It is your chance—your bit of heaven," she retorted. "Why not seize it?"

"By God, I will not!" he cried. "Never!" He caught her by the arm and pushed her into the seat she had left. He dragged aside a screen in the corner of the room, and brought something from behind it; coming to her side he laid it on her knee. It was a small figure molded in white clay, the body unfinished and shapeless, but the head a thing of beauty. It was done in miniature, perfect in outline, true in expression of brow and eye and lip. The woman drew back from it with a quick gasp, her hand pressed to her quivering lips and her eyelids slowly reddened with their burden of gathering tears.

"It was her greatest treasure, her most hidden secret," the artist said. "She showed it to me only after weeks and weeks of friendship, and then she whispered in my ear who it was. 'It is my beautiful mamma, and even Granny mustn't know,' she told me."

The woman dropped her hands with a smothered cry, and they caught and enfolded the little figure, drawing it to her bending lips. She held it close to her cheek and her tears rolled slowly over her clasped hands and dropped into her lap. "My child," she whispered, "my little girl! I have not forgotten you!" It was a long time before she lifted her tear-marked face. "You always knew—then?" she said brokenly.

"Yes," he answered gently. "I knew him well in Paris, and he told me before he died. He told me how he had wandered over those steep hillsides and along the river just as I did several years later, and how he had met you

and taken you from the ignorant people you had grown up with. He spoke of you as having developed into the most beautiful and the cleverest woman he had ever known, and he never blamed you for leaving him and marrying the man who could give you wealth and comfort. He said he had been a brute to you, and you did right to take your chance; but he thought you had the child with you."

She shrank as if he had laid his finger on a raw wound. "He hated the child," she said, her voice shaking. "He was willing to lavish his money on me, but he would not have the child or do anything for it, or let me do anything. I sent her to her grandmother, and I only saw her once in a long time. I did not mean that she should always stay there, but there might have been worse things for her than that free life in the woods. I might have known what my life would be with such a beginning, and such a nature as my hus-

band's. I have starved with plenty about me; all that was best in me has atrophied. He sees in me that thing on your easel there, and he is so constituted that he cannot look higher. It is the attitude of every man about me so far as I have troubled to test them. You, my friend, were different. You have been—have been—a great deal to me, more than you can know. I have bitter regrets gnawing at me, and many mistakes to ponder, but I have never seen you that you did not stir in me a longing to cast aside this stupid life I live and be what I could be. Yet I don't know—" She rose slowly and held out her clasped hands, putting the little clay figure into his. "Keep it," she said. "After all, it is truer of me than that thing you painted in your anger. Keep it, but not in that corner of yours. Your Little Lady shall have her big boy back again—I have done him no real harm, my friend. And now I must go."



## THE SEA

By CHARLES SIBLEIGH

THE sea hath wearied of its play and thrown  
 The shells it toyed with on the fretted shore;  
 At twilight, while the white gulls wheel and soar,  
 I linger in the eventide alone  
 And hearken how the ceaseless waves bemoan  
 The gold that lies on that enchanted floor;  
 And o'er the dead the depths may ne'er restore  
 I hear the Requiem that the winds intone.

O wondrous Sea! Why canst thou ne'er be still?  
 Why must thy waters ever ebb and flow?  
 Hast thou some secret hidden in thy breast?  
 Or, ruled by some inexorable will,  
 Thy troubled tides must ever come and go,  
 Since, like my soul, thou never canst find rest?



# ON THE MOUNTAIN

By MARAVENE KENNEDY THOMPSON

I HAD witnessed many a storm, but never before had I been out in such a tempest as broke over us—myself and bronco—that fateful day on the side of White Head Peak. The whole mountain was an inferno. For an hour we breasted the maddened elements, rain pelting us like hail, wind raging against us like the hissing breath of a million demons. Then the water came rushing down in myriads of mad rivulets, tearing the path from under the bronco's feet.

A quiver of unaccustomed fear shook both horse and rider. "God help us!" I muttered wildly, while the bronco threw back his head and whinnied beseechingly, as though imploring the gods of the warring elements to protect us against themselves.

A whinny came in answer, a long neigh of delight. In a moment the quivering animal had crossed the fallen trunk of a tree, followed a sharp turn of the trail and was upon a small plateau, a low, white house with barn attached facing us. The barn door slid open as we approached. In the dull gray light I made out the figure of a woman.

"Put your horse in this stall and unsaddle," she commanded. She waited in silence, a tall, slender figure, proudly erect, that, seen even in the dim light, seemed alien to the life of the mountain. I had the sensation of having come upon someone I knew well, yet could not place. The silence that she still maintained as I told her my name and profession banished the feeling. As speechless as herself, I followed through the orderly barn to the immaculate kitchen that was our destination.

"Wait here," she enjoined.

There was a hot fire in the shining cook stove. The glow and cheer of the bright tin things on the wall were heartening. I smiled contentedly, my satisfaction deepening as my hostess reappeared. I had not been mistaken. She was young and unusually lovely.

She laid an armful of clothes, together with a bath towel and toilet articles, on a chair beside me.

"I think these will about fit you. Ring this," placing a small brass bell on the table, "when you have changed."

When she appeared at the bell's call she looked me over critically. There came a sudden lighting of her eyes, an impulsive forward movement of her body, much as though she were going to grasp my hand and call me by some endearing appellation. Again I had the peculiar feeling that we knew one another. I felt myself beaming upon her. But swiftly came the sobering thought that I was in fact an uninvited guest and she a stranger.

"I wish you might tell me the name of my benefactress," I said. "I am so deeply in your debt that I want to thank you properly, and without a name . . ."

A quick smile answered mine, delightfully friendly, that made me feel that I was welcome, even if a chance visitor, and that for the moment made a mere name of no consequence.

"Patience," she laughed. "Wait till you are settled before my cheery pine logs."

She led the way through a short hall. The sort of room which I now entered was so little anticipated that I uttered an involuntary "Ah!" I stared, bewildered, at the costly rugs on the

oaken floor, at the fine etchings, pastels, oils, the richly carved furniture, the large bookcase filled with handsomely bound volumes, the baby grand piano.

A savage growl resounded as I sat down, and two huge, gleaming eyes made their way from under the shadowed window seat toward me.

"Down, Lioness, down!" came a stern command.

But the mastiff, an immense creature, hair bristling, teeth exposed, growled again with hoarse menace. A laugh, rippling as a child's, poured from my hostess's throat. She dropped gracefully to a low ottoman almost at my feet, her hand laid lightly on the dog's head.

"Down, Lioness! Show your superior intelligence over mongrel blood, which knows not friend from foe. Ah, that's well. For I would not believe you—no, even if you growled ever so persistently." She raised her laughing face to mine. "Please don't speculate. Enjoy the hour and the place as the birds do."

"I happen to have been born an investigator. All my life my peace has been intruded upon by 'why' and 'how,' and never more so than now."

She smiled half wistfully. "I care nothing about the 'why.' I enjoy things as they are, unquestioning. To dissect a wild mountain rose into *andracium* and *gynacium*! To relegate a gorgeous songbird to measurements of beak and tail! To have a gaudy crimson beetle arouse wild ardor to know whether it is a *necrophorus marginatus* or a *necrophorus Americanus*! And to desire *me* tagged! Ah, well, let us, and be done: Woman found on White Head Peak—name, Miriam Westlake; age, 23; height, 5 feet, 6 inches; weight, 130 or thereabouts; orphan, living alone with mastiff named Lioness. Rare."

She raised her hand imperatively as my lips opened to speak. "I am now properly labeled, so please let's not talk any more of me. I have, myself, *ad infinitum*, and, truth be told, *ad nauseam*. Be good. Tell me of yourself, the swamps you've skirted, the trails lost, the paths you're climbing.

It has been three years since I've had the society of a human creature who speaks the language universal. All birds and beasts have a soul's Esperanto, but only an occasional man."

I found myself staring stupidly down at the brown head. Alone on this vast mountainside where there was no other house for miles! An educated, tenderly nurtured woman braving conditions that might frighten an elemental man! It was all bewildering, astounding. Never did the "why" and "how" clamor louder. Yet, lightly as she had spoken, I knew that her words were a command—if I cared to continue in her favor.

The flames leaped higher, the wind moaned and, shrieked, the rain's monotonous beat against the window panes was a fitting accompaniment for monologic utterance. Somehow I found myself talking. I told the woman sitting at my feet of the fights I had made against a belligerent Fate in my early youth, of the times I had almost forsaken the quest for knowledge, of the black despair that had goaded me to yet greater efforts and, at last, partial success. I did not hide my ambitions, nor my many skepticisms, nor heresies. And I spoke boldly of my hopes—hardly before breathed to myself, my desire to be the foremost geologist of the age, to have my name indelibly stamped in history: Reed Belmont, *the* geologist.

It was not my custom to talk of these things. It seemed marvelous to me as my words rounded into silence that I had spoken of myself in this intimate manner.

"Thank you," she uttered softly. "I have, as you see, books, magazines, papers. I read about political doings, scientific discoveries, religious controversies. I even take a fashion magazine so that I shall be a part of the outside world even in my wearing apparel. But—I wanted to *touch* life, to have *you* speak of yourself to *me*. I wanted, if just once, the dear personal contact—to feel again the force of a present personality."

The firelight played over her features. I saw there more than physical loveliness. Yet it was too virile a beauty, too superbly healthful, too riotous in coloring, to think of it as "angelic." It was more as though the light of the soul within flung a dazzling light across it. I did not conjecture about her history as she left me to prepare supper. My spirit was struggling to fathom hers, to get some grasp of the inner woman revealed by her few words and the wonderful radiance of her eyes.

I accepted her hospitality as simply as she proffered it. The storm still raged. I knew it might hover over us for days. I was her guest till the weather cleared and the roads became passable—forty-eight hours yet at least.

Supper, served in a handsome dining room on fine china and linen, was another revelation of the practical accomplishments of this paradoxical woman. A Spanish omelette, flaky hot biscuits, cream cheese, golden honey, a luscious apple pie with thick yellow cream, then—a choice Mexican cigar. My amazement grew.

"The 'why' and 'how' are pressing very hard, aren't they?" she queried, smiling. "It is all very simple. My father came here five years ago to get away from the distractions of city and town. He was a scientist like yourself, only his specialty was botany. He settled down here to write some books. He died in two years with the work uncompleted. I have income enough to live here, but nowhere else as comfortably, unless I could realize from this place what father put in it—not even a probability at present. And I am not sure I want to leave here if I could. I am almost happy. I have learned the calls of the birds; even the butterflies and rabbits have accepted me as one of them. There are a thousand things to interest me. And there is nothing to harm me—here."

"Nothing to harm you!" I cried. "What if it had been some fiend that you opened your doors to?"

"A little lead could save me even from an arch demon. Then there is Lioness—so fiercely my champion that I dared not allow her to go with me to let you in. Even now, while you break bread with me, she is watching, ready to rend you to bits at my slightest signal. She is never off guard. She watches Wapotah, the Indian woman from the village who comes up to do my heavy work and chores, as closely as the first day she came here. She will eat from no hand but mine. She sleeps inside my door, awake at the slightest unusual sound. No—there is nothing *here* to harm me."

I caught an undercurrent of tragedy in her voice as she uttered the last words. There came to my mind, dimly, that I had heard the name Westlake connected with something unpleasant—that not desire for seclusion, but escape from disgrace had occasioned Hubert Westlake's retreat to this mountain wilderness. And that his child now feared the scorn or the vengeance of the world outside more than the terrors of loneliness or the dangers incidental to her isolated condition, was my instant belief. Yet I could not view her presence here without alarm, nor commend her course under any circumstances. For the moment I held my peace. She was not a woman to be dominated without her consent. Gracious as she was, even delightfully approving, there were yet a deep reserve, a queenly dignity, intermingled.

On our return to the sitting room we talked of gold mining and the development of the mountain town. But first I dried the dishes for her, torn between a strange content that was settling over me and nervousness caused by the constant espionage of Lioness. That night I occupied Hubert Westlake's room, a richly furnished chamber that had a welcoming appearance seldom afforded by a room not permanently occupied.

"I keep it this way," she explained, "papers and notebooks about, his slippers and dressing coat out, the waste basket filled, to make it seem that he is not truly gone."

Her words were hurried, a little catch of fear breaking them, fear of her loneliness and of the desolation it meant to her to have that room vacant. Tired as I was, I lay awake part of the night, listening to the roar of the wind and troubling over the affairs of my hostess. I could not separate myself from a belief that she needed my particular help and that I had been "sent" to her.

The storm lasted all night. Next day it still played sullenly, and the next, and the next. I did the chores about the barn, falling easily into the ways of the little home and enjoying it immeasurably. For the first time in my thirty-two years I found pleasure in the continued society of one woman. Miriam Westlake had been her father's constant companion. She argued as a judicious man argues, logically, forcefully and without temper. Her quick mind, stored with the knowledge of the best books and current magazines, played over the world's activities much as an expert musician over the keys of a piano. There were, besides, an indescribable charm of manner and an exquisite sympathy with one's moods, so pleasing to a man—the sort of woman that a man can forgive many faults, even grave ones, and still love madly.

The fourth day the storm suddenly died. In an hour the sun came out; the heavens changed from a murky gray to the clearest of turquoise blue; the black clouds faded to a snowy whiteness. Soon there were the singing of birds, the twittering and soft whirring of insects, the scurrying of gophers and rabbits from crevices and tree trunks.

Miriam's face reflected the radiance of the new day. "Do you wonder I love this mountain life?" she cried. "Here I feel truly one with God's universe, akin even to the storm. At first I felt myself an intruder; once I crept into the forest in a rain, and it was as though I had broken into a saint's guarded retreat. The majesty and solemnity there were not for me to invade. Gradually I sensed my full kinship with wind and rain, birds and

flowers, with the great old mountain itself."

"Yet you love the world you have left," I asserted. "You are yearning for it as a homesick child. All of God's universe is not found in trees and rocks and blossoms. You need human society, contact with your own kind. It is horrible for me to contemplate your isolated life here: This is a glorious spot to spend a few months in with congenial friends, but to live here, and alone—no!"

Her head moved swiftly in dissent. "Forgive me, but I have thought it all out. I am much like the gentlemen of the road, the happy hobos: outdoor life and my leisure I will have—be the cost what it may. If I could have the joy of this place *and* the companionship and pleasures that a city gives—then I should go, and gladly."

"Come with me," I answered simply. "Be my wife."

Her face flushed a beautiful rose. "You are kind, very. I shall never forget your chivalry in desiring my happiness at the cost of your own liberty." Then her eyes grew very tender. "I think you are in all ways a grand, noble man, Mr. Belmont." She reached out her hand. "I am happy, deeply blessed, to have known you."

"It is love, not chivalry," I said gently. "I want you more than I have ever wanted anything in my life. These few days have been a revelation to me. I did not know there could be such happiness in this world."

"Nor I," she answered softly, and gazed at me with proudly fearless eyes. "My love!" she whispered. "*My love!*" Her hands stayed me. "But wait! I do not believe in marriage. I may go with you, but not as your wife."

The purity of the lovely upturned face forbade belief in her words. I could only laugh, and joyously from out the bliss of my heart.

"You must believe me," she implored. "I would go with you to the furthest ends of the earth, your loving, faithful wife till life ends. But not married by man—no!"

Her gravity impressed me. "I don't understand," I stammered.

"I could not have our love profaned by *man's* professing to bind us together!" she exclaimed vehemently.

"And I could not dishonor the woman I love," was my answer. "Dear child, you do not understand. You have lived here among the birds till your faith has become as simple and innocent as theirs. God knows, I value your trust in me."

There was a sudden mist in my eyes. It was touching, her faith and beautiful guilelessness.

She drew away. "No, you must not kiss me. We shall say our good-bye—if we must say good-bye—as simple friends should. We shall always be friends—yes?"

"My wife shall surely be my friend," I replied. "For you are to be my wife, Miriam. It is so ordered by Fate. Come, let us reason together."

A two hours' wordy combat, then another in the evening, yet another the following morning. Still Miriam Westlake remained obdurate. She would give herself into my keeping willingly, only it must be God who joined us together, with our mutual love for license, Nature and our own souls the witnesses. Nothing I said could change her determination. It appeared almost as though she were impelled by some masterful spirit that controlled her against her will, for her own heart was as cruelly wrung as mine. At moments it seemed that she was ready to yield; her hands would flutter involuntarily toward me, her quivering lips almost speak the words of surrender. But no. She would be married this way or she should say farewell to me forever. She gave no reason, only that she *could not* do any other way and not desecrate her soul.

I was staggered. It was inexplicable—unheard of—utter madness. Yet, it could separate us unless . . .

And it seemed sheer cruelty for her own sake to leave her to her isolation. She was alone in the world, as I was. We could live our own lives. And I wanted her! My need for her grew

with the hours. She was doubly sweet with the enchantment of love over her. I had never known a woman's tenderness or a real home. My heart was hungry for love, for companionship, for *her*—the one soul in the universe that belonged to me by love's ukase.

"You will take me," she pronounced solemnly, seeing the hunger in my eyes. Her healthful color fled before her emotion; her cheeks were suddenly pallid, as with death. "You will take me—because you love me!"

There were drops of agony on my face.

"Because I love you I must not take you," I cried.

"You choose—"

"Your honor. An hour ago I thought I could not leave you. But *I can*, thank God!"

As I rode down the mountain my soul was in as great a conflict as had been the elements when I traversed the road five days before. Again and again I almost turned the bronco's head. Yet I went steadily forward. It bewildered me—my tenacity of purpose, my grim determination to save her from herself. My desire for her presence, my pleas to convince myself that I might rightly yield to her whim, my remorse over making her suffer—strongly as these tugged, yet there was a greater pull the other way. She was without a mother's guidance; she was fatherless, and her life was such as to make her incapable of fully understanding the world's viewpoint. She was temporarily blind, a visionary child who in the dark would leap to her own destruction. Pure and innocent as she would truly be, she would be judged as harshly as the supremest sinner, and would have to pay the heavy penalty that the world always demands of a woman. Nothing is secret. Sooner or later our "soul marriage" would be known as—but even in thought I could not use the world's phrasing in connection with my beautiful, innocent girl.

I went back to my work. The days passed into weeks, then months. I wrote to her constantly. Her an-

swers were fragrant breaths of the mountains, calling before me in tender intimacy the quaint, pastoral life. She completely ignored my pleas and arguments. She wrote freely of her love, but with a touch of solemnity, as of a precious legacy of remembrance. In her studied calmness I caught only occasional glimpses of the real Miriam Westlake, the vivacious, sparkling, versatile woman, the vivid, compelling personality, whose very memory was vital with bounding life. Then came a letter, written with scrawling haste, a quivering cry wrung from out her mighty need:

DEAR:

It was not chance that brought you to me. What opportunity, one would naturally think, was there for a woman hid on a mountain, twenty miles from civilization, to meet her heaven-appointed mate? Yet I knew that I should. Gifted men have come here while father lived—several who seemed to find me pleasing. "You are not my liege lord," my heart always cried, "and I shall wait till my liege comes. When I went into the kitchen that afternoon and saw you beaming contentedly over your change from wet garments to dry, I looked you over carefully—to see whether or no you were to be my guest, whether you were gentleman or vagabond, friend or foe. Our eyes met—our spirits spoke—I *knew* in that fleeting moment that my liege had come. My heart sang almost to bursting. I could not keep my delighted eyes off you. Do you know how good you are to look upon—the charm of your sharp cut face, the gray eyes—clear as a child's, yet pools of wisdom—the thin lips, boyishly mobile, the quick smile that plays over your face as deftly as sunshine? You will blush in your man's way over this. Yet you are glad, I know, that I love your face, your strong, lithe body.

You came to me—and you will come again. Shall a little matter of a man's mouthing a few words over us keep us apart? Shall it?

Dear, it is wonderful today on the mountain—birds, grass, clouds, cattle, all the universe sings of the Creator. The gold and red are here; not even spring is as marvelous, as aflame with splendor as this gorgeous autumn. Yet, oh, my dear, winter is coming. For once I fear it. I feel it binding me, closing down on me. Dear, you can't, you won't leave me here . . .

I found her standing against a tree halfway between the valley and her home. As she saw me her face lighted up to a loveliness superhuman. In a trice she was in my arms, her lips—that had

refused mine even in good-bye—now yielding in a blessed abandon.

"You are here! You are here!"

"Yes, brought to my senses at last. I have been a dolt. But your letter illuminated even my befuddled brain. I shall take my precious girl—"

"Oh, oh!" It was a shriek of agony. She drew away, the joy of her face shriveling as under a blast. Wildly she threw herself face downward on the bare earth, frenziedly beating the air with her hands, veritably crazed with the raging tumult within her. "It can't be! Oh, my love—it can't be!"

"It *shall* be. I have brought a license, a minister and witnesses with me. In another ten minutes you shall be my wife—with your consent or without it."

I stooped to raise her. But she leaped to her feet, laughing, crying, kissing me, dancing on her toes like a joy-maddened child.

"Wait!" Her words were hurried, breathless. "I had a sister. She was disgraced, died in direst ignominy—and all through a man who idolized her, but who had not the will to defy her, to *save her from herself*. We are an obstinate race, reckless, defiant, self-willed, bent on our own destruction. My brother—but I cannot speak of his end even to you. Father died literally from a broken heart. I promised him never to marry a man who was not strong enough to protect me, to save me from my own folly, no matter what force I brought to bear upon him. I promised him to keep away from the world's temptations till I had a protector who could protect, and who would. I gave my oath to test him to a point where I should *know*. And only my oath made me try you so far, because—oh, my love, forgive me!—I was afraid, horribly afraid. I wanted you so dreadfully that I knew the strength of your temptation. My own passion for you made me weak. I would so willingly not have tried you, so gladly have trusted you blindly. But always could I see father's suffering eyes goading me on to try, try till



I knew—*knew*. And all the while I was in a tumult, rent between my trust in *you* and my fear of your *love*. I went to the valley to try to get back my letter after Wapotah had taken it. I was frantic when I found it already gone. Then I was glad, for I felt it would surely be the end. If you resisted my cry, then I should fly to you; if you surrendered—but I *dare* not think of that. And

now—oh, my dear, I thought you had—*you!*”

There was a snap of a broken twig behind us.

“Are you ready? May we come?” sounded the clergyman’s hearty voice.

“Yes,” answered Miriam. “To marry the happiest woman in the world to the—”

“—happiest man,” I completed.

“No,” she cried—“the bravest.”



## THE PLAIN OF THE POET

By PHILIP HAMLIN

NOW where hath weary winter vanished all so soon?

The snow that banked its drift of serried white  
Along the roadside bleak but yesternoon

Is gone before the spring sun’s warming blight,  
And where it lay so long on lifeless sod

The slim, green shoots of coming verdure peep,  
That only waited ’neath the roughened clod  
To wake from winter’s long enforced sleep.

There’s trill of throaty music from the trees,  
And glimpse of plumage gay among the boughs;  
The smell of bursting bulbs floats on the breeze  
Whose sweet, soft breath the coming spring avows.  
All nature lends its voice to joyous song;  
The gurgling brook in rippling notes rejoices  
At glad release from icy bondage long;  
A droning bee his drowsy pleasure voices.

A hoarse frog, deep in April’s softening slough,  
Croaks double bass to be awake again;  
The turtle doves their liquid love notes coo;  
And cheery chatter swells the glad refrain  
From noisy blackbirds’ rape of unreaped shock.  
A weazened chipmunk scurries to and fro,  
A lazy lizard seeks a sunlit rock,  
Nor fears the clam’rous threat of cawing crow.

Great Scott, it’s hard to write on harbingers of spring  
With winter only fairly just begun!  
But out of season I must always sing—  
My Christmas verse in summer’s heat is done,  
My autumn idyl’s written in July,  
And if my spring is forced, you’ll please remember  
The burden on the Editor must lie—  
He prints his April number in December.

# OUR FOREIGN PRINCESSES

By EDGAR SALTUS

WE have seen denounced as undesirables those daughters of the rich that have become what is termed foreign princesses. But is it to be preferred that the daughters of the rich, or even of the newly poor, should be native princesses? The breed may be unknown; it is not impossible.

There is a young Virginian who has succeeded in being born both an American and a lord. There is an old New Yorker who has contrived to become a duke. What men can do, women may surpass. Though, save in gipsy camps, royal circles, mediatized houses and in Russia, it is difficult for a girl to be born a princess. In Russia it is difficult for a girl to be born anything else. But Russia holds no patent for the process and there is not a reason—except common sense—why girls should not encounter cognate difficulties here. In just what manner we will shortly describe.

Meanwhile, in this part of the planet, it has become modish not to spend money. Parallely, in Europe the taste for titles has declined. Everybody, everywhere, is becoming democratic. On both sides of the water it is smart to be close-fisted and open-armed. One of the landed gentry—landed, that is, in the panic—declared that fashionable penury was due to an exhaustion of capital which, beginning with him, had extended all over the world. Unless he was wrong, he may have been right. But, personally, in common with other philosophers, we attribute it to sun spots. Similarly, there are psychologists who hold that the increasing democracy of Europe has been induced first by the bike, then by the

bubble. We ascribe it to the American heiress or, more exactly, to those daughters of the rich that have been catalogued as foreign princesses. Foreign they may be, but only to *naïvetés* such as that.

These young women, being to our manner born, are generally lacking in reverence, particularly for rank. The majority would not marry a prince for love or for money. But they do and will marry for an entrée to the modern Olympus which the heights of European society comprise. And, after all, why not? Life on these altitudes sets them in relief, lifts them from the blank anonymity to which humanity in the aggregate is eternally condemned, lends them a frame and provides them incidentally with a form of existence which, however mundane and therefore frivolous, has yet a flavor which none other comports.

The flavor is perhaps not quite as savorous as it once was. Relatively, as time goes, it is only the day before yesterday that any peer, however coarse, was sacrosanct, and all gentlefolk, however ungenteel, were holy. The rest of the world was composed of insects—useful, obsequious, parasitic. Now a tradesman will county-court a lord as readily as in days gone by a lord would have hamstrung the varlet. For that matter, it is but a few months since that a reigning sovereign was sued by his butcher. This change in the order of things is not due to the American heiress, but it is due to the very forces that have produced her.

Since Phœnicia, the United States is the foremost commercial nation of which history has cognizance. Successes

in this country have stimulated in England a taste for trade which formerly would have been thought demeaning. Today it is thought redeeming. What is true of England applies to France and is beginning to apply to Italy. That is not due, either, to the American girl, but at least she has had her finger in the pie.

The lady has had it elsewhere. Permeating Europe as she does, many of her modes have been copied. Among these is her native disinclination for clarets. On the Continent, until within very recent years, everybody drank Bordeaux and Burgundies. Today the sobriety of fashionable life is such that the Rothschilds advertise their Mouton at three francs fifty the bottle. To return now to our own muttons, among which this brand is not included, that is one of the changes that the American girl has induced, and rather marvelously, too, for though intoxicating as she naturally is, none the less she sobers.

That is a very beautiful trait. Meanwhile, with the passing of old wines, genealogists express themselves as perturbed by the passing of old families. Assuming that they speak the truth, it does not take much to disturb them. Even otherwise, such passing is in the order of things. At sight of the blunderbuss, the knight in armor crumbled. To Aristos the touch of trade is as thoroughly disintegrating. In spite of which, there are, as we will show, plenty of old families that not merely still persist, but whom the American heiress is actively engaged in renovating.

The best names in Europe are—or were—the De Veres of England and the Montmorencys of France. They have vanished. By way of compensation there are two thousand people of title in Great Britain, and in France there are twice that number. These figures are awful to contemplate. They are, though, refreshingly meager beside the full half-million which at last accounts Russia could show. Spain and Germany are less opulent. In Spain there are grandees by the acre, but not

*sangre azul* by the pail, not the blue blood free from Hebraic and Moorish admixture of which the *hidalgo* is made. *Blaues blut*, while more disseminated in Germany, flows mainly in mediatized veins. By comparison, the blood of the Hohenzollerns, though royal and also imperial, is relatively new. In the cosmopolitan world of fashion it is chiefly Italians that preserve and present the real thing.

In Italy are the Colonnas, the Massimi, the Orsini, the Strozzi and Tutti Quanti—particularly the latter—all of whom are more or less authentically antique. The Colonnas descend from Colonnus, who was a relative of Nero, that is to say, of a demon, and the Massimi descend from Fabius Maximus, who was a relative of the gods.

There is imagination. Here now is art. In the Colonna gallery is a picture of the Resurrection, in which members of this house are represented as receiving exclusive attention above. The modesty of that is not perhaps excessive, and yet in the gallery of the ducal house of Levis—who descend, by the way, and all the way, from Judah—there is a picture of one of the lot standing before the Madonna, who says, "Cousin, do sit down."

That is certainly very fine. But in Abyssinia, Menelik, with Solomon and the Queen of Sheba behind him, exceeds it. In Wales, the Mostyns, whose pedigree begins with Noah, eclipse even that. It will be objected that this is all nonsense. Of course it is. Every educated person, everyone, that is, who has so much as glanced over the polite literature of the cuneiform inscriptions, knows perfectly well that Noah never existed and that the Queen of Sheba never was. On the other hand, we Americans also have our little jests. Local genealogists, after occupying themselves in finding what Europe has lost, have discovered among us a regiment of descendants from Alfred the Great and, with them, quite an army descending from other and greater sovereigns.

By comparison with Noah and Judah, by comparison, too, with demons and

gods, mere modern monarchs are perhaps not much to boast of. Yet, then, in these latitudes we have to take what we can get. It is pot luck. There are even those among us who lack so much as that, for which reason it is only human that, in default of homemade heraldry, they should seek an equivalent in titles abroad.

Titles are decorative and deciduous. However a man may try, he cannot share his brains with his wife, but, if the brute have a title, he has to divide it with her. If only for that reason, these things are delightful. Moreover, with them, for good measure, go trains, tiaras, ermines with, *pardessus le marché*, the entrée to fastidious courts thrown in—or, as has regrettably happened, thrown out. It is all quite fairy-like and the glamor of it is such that the mothers of the present and future princelets of Europe have largely come from these shores.

Consider, s. v. p., the cream of French cream. On the distaff side, when not wholly Hebraic, it is entirely United States. Occasionally it is even both. What is true of French cream is true of the English and applies also to Italian curds and whey. If it does not equally apply to the German, it may be because the Kaiser rather soured it by calling our girls *gemeine Amerikanerinnen*, a description which, whether true or false, is not preventing them from transforming the politest sections of the globe.

The marriages of these young women furnish usually money, often beauty, occasionally brains. When, through them and others to follow, the nobility of Europe becomes, as ultimately it must become, at once extinct and yet renewed, a complete renovation of that part of the world will ensue. For it is a fact on which snobbery and philosophy both agree, that those who enter the world with all their lower ambitions satisfied, and who therefore retain but the higher and, by the same token, the only legitimate ones, make the best leaders of men. But every silver lining has its cloud. However excellent such results may be for

Europe, we Americans always regret that our girls should be utilized for them. Even foreigners have protested. Not long ago a Paris publicist turned his inkstand into a volcano and cried from the flames, "The female Yankee is a peacock."

Peahen, perhaps. But not peacock. None the less, the publicist scored a point. The lady is a *rara avis*—one whose export should be checked and would be, were proper measures devised. In a moment we will proceed to devise them. Meanwhile it is perhaps worth noting that in Europe's slow but assured recovery from the virus of monarchy, by which the various leprosies known as dukedoms, principalities and marquises have been superinduced, it is chiefly in Germany, which is feudal still, and in Russia, which is Oriental when not barbaric, that the course of the distemper is unabated yet. But elsewhere, in lands more progressive and consequently more philosophic, coronets have long since come to be regarded for what they are—medieval bric-à-brac; toys for big children; gauds once glittering, now tawdry and—save for women—ridiculous in a democratic world. On an occasion, when the Kaiser created Bismarck Duke of Lauenberg, the Statesman, in thanking the Emperor, remarked that the honorific would be useful when he wished to travel incog.

Disraeli, who could also say very agreeable things, at one time refused a title for himself while accepting another for his wife. He struck the proper note. When society here becomes ideal, when it does, women will all be married and men will all be single. In conditions of parallel charm abroad, no man will be titled and all women will be. The reason is tolerably obvious. Not long ago men of position wore laces and jewels. These things indicated their rank. They were known by their dress. It is by their address that they are known today. Meanwhile their former embellishments have been abandoned to women, and very becoming they are. It requires no gift of prophecy to foretell that it will

be the same with titles. Like jewels and laces they are suitable only for feminine use.

Jewels and laces, big hats, whatever is modish, expensive or ugly, women will buy, if they have the money, and quite as cheerfully if they haven't. There is, therefore, no valid reason why they should be prevented from buying titles also. It may be objected that some of them do, and for rather imposing sums. But in such transactions they get a husband, too, some ordinary person, offensive enough to be mistaken for a prince, even if he did not happen to be one. There are sweeter methods, easier ways.

A few years ago a bill was submitted to the Italian Parliament authorizing the sale of titles. Coincidentally, in England, Mr. Labouchere suggested a similar measure. In Italy such a bill was hardly necessary. Apart from the Vatican—usually beneficent to the generously inclined—there is a process called adoption, by which a title can be ceded. An arrangement of this kind was effected by a San Francisco stock jobber, who for five hundred lire—less than a hundred dollars—obtained the right, which when in Europe he indecently exercises, of calling himself prince. There is the further case of a Chicago divorcee who, for reasons that we cannot indicate, but which, on that account, will be the more readily appreciated, purchased in Rome the privilege of being known and addressed as princess. It is related that subse-

quently, at a reception, a man approached the lady and with much diffidence and equal deference asked whether he had not had the honor of meeting her somewhere before. Whereupon the princess, who, if precarious, was pretty, blushed deliciously and exclaimed, "Why, yes, I used to be your wife."

The story is probably untrue and therefore all the more interesting. But the episode goes to show that ladies who like may purchase titles if they will. Even so, the method is cumbersome. It entails inordinate delays and endless tape. The measures cited had in view their sale over the counter, in the same manner and with the same ease that Government bonds can be bought.

A bill of this character, but one from the benefits of which men were debarred, might advantageously be enacted here. Having only feminine interests in view, such a bill would not be unconstitutional. It would not interfere with the tariff and would be a protective measure of the proper sort. It would increase the revenue, decrease the deficit, please the women, appease the prejudiced, check the export of our girls and enable the era of native princesses to begin. It would not provide the latter with an entrée to European courts, but it might preserve them from those of bankruptcy and divorce.

Ladies in favor of it are invited to say "Aye."



## THE OTHER

By GWENDOLA INCH

OH, do not come across the years to me!  
 Stay! Let me dream of you as I have known.  
 Another's sorrows made the furrows in your brow,  
 Another's lips crushed out the roses from your own.  
 'Twas for another that you suffered most,  
 And to another altar that your love was brought.  
 I have not known nor felt the pain it cost,  
 Nor can I love the changes that another wrought.

# THE TOWER MAN

By NORMAN D. GRAY

THE brain of Jem Smithers began to move. Like a rusty clock long wound, it responded to a sudden shock and started to function with a protesting tick. The tick was sensibly audible to Jem, but not distracting, for he placed it at once as the click-click of a Morse receiver, and he had lived in the tower too long to pay more than casual heed to the sounder. His brain had stopped two months ago when he had left his tower with the officer, and it now jarred his head with a whirl of jangling emotions like a piece of rusty machinery—just like that, he thought again.

What had set it in motion? Oh, yes, the jury was slowly filing into the court room. Their little foreman, no doubt, held Jem's fate in his grasp. How did he know that? He glanced at the clock; they had been out only fifteen minutes. Yes, he could remember each step of the trial. His brain had been more like a river motionless behind a dam until the accumulated pressure of two months had burst the breast with the crash of which he had been conscious. Into this reservoir had been falling outward impressions, assimilated like so many water drops, but he was conscious of this only now in the onward motion of the river of his thoughts. He was fleetingly amused; the jury's entrance was the cloudburst which had given him his present painful relief.

He glanced at the jurymen. They were not all through the door. The outward scene again faded from his vision and he felt himself adrift upon a vociferous torrent, swirled here and there and about, with the roar of many waters in his ears. He began to take

note of the shifting bank, the glittering double track of the railroad along the shore, the square brown tower with its letters too small to read, but visibly taking form as he bobbed nearer. "SM"! It was as if a pistol shot had waked him. That tower! His own!

He fixed his eyes upon the jury and could count eleven. The last was just appearing at the door. God! Would they never reach their seats? He must not think!

Again he saw the tower—his tower—and it was night. He would not enter, for deep in his subconsciousness he knew that to go in would be to live again through that past anguish of torment. With an effort he turned his eyes upon the crowd, but the faces were mere daubs. He experienced the same surprise that he had once felt upon the close inspection of a painted multitude. He became aware that his big fingers were tap-tapping on the rail of the dock.

Dash-dash, dot-dot-dash, dot, dot-dot . . .

He was spelling *murder, murder*, incessantly, in the Morse code. He snatched his hand away, but the click-click of the receiver beat upon his brain. The milder insistence of the relay drummed in his ear with a certain relief.

Dot-dot-dot, dash-dash, dot-dot-dot, dash-dash . . .

It was his call and could not be disregarded. He was back in the tower receiving instructions to hold No. 12 for the Limited.

"O.K."

With a swish of skirts, she was past—the aristocrat. He gave Brown of No. 12 his orders and stood under the



stars as the red lights sank into the night, then turned to gaze at the light in his wife's window down the road. It was spring. With a sigh, he turned to the steps. In the circle of his lantern gleamed a letter on the third step. It had not been there when he came down, he was sure of that. It was addressed to him. Throwing a kiss to the distant window light, he climbed the stairs, which he always half expected to refuse to bear his weight of bone and muscle, and tore open the envelope under the lamp.

Mebbe you think yer purty wife is true to you. Mebbe she ain't. Go and see. Go now!

WEL WISHER.

Twice he read it, and with a brain blood-dizzied was on his feet—facing a crowded court room. His great hands gripped the arms of his chair, hands far too clumsy, apparently, to operate a key. He thought this, as he examined them, sinking into his seat with the new-old miserable sensation of being the target of ten thousand eyes.

The jury was filing into the box. It had already been hours since they came in. Would this torture never cease?

Torture! Once more the black scrawl, cowardly, anonymous, flashed before his eyes across the white page, and he found himself moving automatically about the tower, setting his signals so that he could leave safely for a half-hour, at least. No regular was due for a full hour after No. 12, and special orders were unlikely.

"It's a lie! It's a lie!" he heard himself saying between his teeth. Over and over he repeated it as he prepared to leave.

"Then why go, if you are so sure?"

He wheeled about, but it was a voice within him which had spoken. His very thought was automatic, and two voices, one the product of long training and conventional thought, the other sounding down the ages in the heart of man, took up the argument.

"If he knows it is a lie he need not go."

"If he knows it is a lie he need not fear to go."

"Suppose it should be true! He had better wait."

"True! Just God! Then let him kill—kill—kill!"

He felt himself running like a mad thing to reach a destination which he wished were twice as far away. Maggie! No, it was unthinkable! But he must be sure—he must be sure. If he could know who wrote the letter and it lied—that man—later! The other man—if he should be even now— He suddenly realized that he had no weapon; but he had his hands, thank God for them! He was at his door. It was ajar. Inside, in the darkness, he had met him . . .

His brow was clammy with cold sweat. The jurymen opposite were shuffling into their places. He had lived an eternity in a moment. A lawyer was tapping upon the table with his pencil—tick-tick—it was too fast for Jem to read—no, he had it! He was back in SM striving to read a confused message from the division station master.

As soon as he returned after—after he had done—what he had done, he wired:

Have killed man. Send substitute. Can run things O. K. till he comes.

The wire was active:

Where was accident? Can't send sub. Are you hurt?

Stupid idiots! He lost patience.

No. I—have—murdered—a—man. Must give self up. Send sub p. d. q.

No. 40 sped south. He took up the routine work. How simple it seemed! All orderly and without confusion, yet his brain was bubbling in his head, and for the first time in his life he was conscious of his heartbeats; they had suffocated him ever since. There was a step upon the stair. It would be his relief. He rose and confronted a pistol in the hands of the law.

"You come along o' me. They sent me up for you. I said t' meself, Jem Smithers never killed no man—till I seen that blood."

Blood? He looked at his hands and wondered. But he couldn't go with the officer until he was relieved from

duty; that was clear. It was past midnight and work would be brisker every minute. What a stupid owl of a man he had to deal with! Finally by sheer force of will power he made his point. The bewildered bluecoat was quiescent, but not convinced.

Five hours they waited, while he worked swiftly, surely, with his instruments and levers. They had referred during the trial to his iron nerve. Bah! Mere reflex action! He had been an automaton and the hours had seemed but minutes.

Not another word did he speak, but God, how his mind had threshed the whole thing out! His wife he could not think of. The man? Was he worth the killing? Who was Jem Smithers to take the punishment of a fellow being into his own hands? He looked at their hairy backs, always red, but never so red as this, and burst into a laugh. Punishment? What had he thought of punishment with his fingers on that throat, and the instinct of a thousand generations running riot in his veins?

But here was Saunders and he must go. Thank God, his brain had stopped from that hour. Why had his thoughts begun to flow again? It was more than any man could bear.

The judge was speaking to the jury. Jem looked at the expressionless face of the foreman. What would those thin lips utter? He found himself praying with all the force of his great body for a verdict of guilty. What had he to live for, with murder on his soul, and Maggie—

He was back in the dark hallway of his house and felt the straining body he had closed with.

"Jem! I writ—aghr-r—*Jem-m*—"

His fingers were at work. What resistance could avail? The pure lust of killing was in him, and he could feel the head wobble on the neck as he beat it against the wall. The body—it made him sick—he threw far into the road.

The chair arm came off in his hand. The foreman was speaking:

"... not guilty."

Jem Smithers was a free man—he had dropped dead in the dock.

## II

MRS. JEREMIAH SMITHERS looked deep into her own brown eyes with a scrutiny so searching, so impersonal, that their glance wavered and the heavy lids drooped flutteringly. She looked past her naked shoulder in the cracked mirror which stood upon the table in front of her and saw the dingy red wallpaper, the red puff upon the bed, the red shade of the lamp, a red plush chair, and shuddered as she took in this accidental predominance of her favorite color. Why had they given her this room? She again caught her eye in the glass, and her red lips drew back from a double row of white teeth in a mocking smile. The expressive mouth changed as she watched it; the flexible lips curled swiftly at the corners into bitter lines, and the whole sensuous face depicted sullen anger.

How had she stood this red room for two months? Restlessly her lithe fingers loosed the red ribbon from her hair, and with a physical vehemence which gave her a sense of relief she flung her slazy wrapper into a dark corner, where it huddled almost indistinguishable from the background of wallpaper and ragged carpet.

Once more she crouched before the mirror and let her bare arms rest their full length upon the cool table. Her dark hair had fallen and wound like a live thing about her shoulders and half concealed her breast, whose perfect curve she adored.

What had led her to marry Jem? Like every other man she ever knew, he had loved her; unlike the others, he had offered marriage. Why he had done this she remembered wondering at the time, but later she knew it had been out of the depths of a good simplicity; he had not known, was not capable of realizing her past. On impulse she had yielded to his fervor. It was the animal in her that had loved his animality, though to apply

such a word to the fine physical vigor which kept his mind and body sweet seemed almost coarse. He had never understood her—she thanked God for it now—and at the end of a month his deferential love nauseated her. What had she to do with marriage? She could never have made one man anything but miserable; but two men—ah! It was this that had been Jem's undoing.

She twisted and turned herself before the glass. She knew that Jem's neighbors had thought her too much of the grand lady, too pretty for the plain telegraph operator. She saw that she was beautiful. The contrast of dark hair against the curiously dull amber of her skin was impellingly attractive, even without the challenge of her eyes, the appeal of the large, tender mouth, and the tigerish grace of an almost faultless form. What had given her this distinction of beauty, this subtle physical refinement? Without clothes she might be taken for a queen, she thought. So Mr. Irving had told her, adding, "For your beauty, Madge, is never meretricious," and she knew it for a compliment. What had attracted her in Dick Irving? Money? No, but the assurance of poise and width of view that money brings.

A month after her marriage Dick had met her in this very city, thirty miles from home—Jem's home. They had not seen each other for a year, and her bondage had already become irksome. Ah, no, no, she did not excuse herself now, but—and she gazed miserably at the lovely face opposite her—what would you? It was not long before she permitted him to come at night when Jem was busy in the tower. With a startling vividness, that one awful night came before her, and she shrank from the terror in the eyes confronting hers. Jem had killed—killed as he should, and for her—but the mockery of that murder! She crouched again in dread lest she should hear his heavy tread upon the stairs, but he had left on a run. Good God! If he had known! How she had then feared that his frenzy might lead him

to her room—how she wished now that it had led him thither.

Her thoughts hovered about Jem. She could see him in the room, his free muscles playing under his fair skin and growing tense in his long arms as he reached them to her. With an eager cry, she was on her feet—but the man before her was not Jem—Jem whom she loved—yes, *loved*—loved now, she knew, and forever—but a dapper, smaller man, whom she—*hated*.

"Jem! Jem!" she sobbed. "What of him? The verdict! Tell me the verdict!"

"Not guilty, but . . ."

"Oh, thank God, thank God! I love him, I love him! Don't interrupt me—don't stop me—see, I have scissors! You cursed fool, do you think I ever loved you? Ah, no, no! If I ever said so I was daft—crazy! Stand back, I say! You brought me to this house, but haven't I *paid*? Have I taken a dollar of your bloody money since—that night? Oh, you disgusting thing, you—you *little* man! You that should be a rotting corpse where you stand! And why should you not be? Jem shall know—and I will tell him. I will tell him what vile thing lurked in the house that night. You cur! You, who cringed in fear, permitting a brave man to take upon his soul the wanton murder, with an imaginary motive, of an innocent man!"

"Innocent! Because he had to be."

"Oh, you can sneer. No man who ever knew me was innocent save for that cause. Your dirty soul is blood-guilty of Bob's murder—for murder it was, and you the murderer, not Jem, who did not know. The very motive that brought poor Bob to the house that night was to save me—and you perhaps—from the consequences of a note written in sudden jealousy. And you, you toad—you vermin—let him be killed almost before your eyes!"

"If ever a man got his deserts that man did."

Her figure straightened; her somber eyes glowed luminously, and she held the scissors high in air. She was the

embodiment of tragedy, but she was trembling with nerve weariness.

"Ugh! How I hate you—how I hate you!" she said. "Oh! if I could *kill* you—but Jem . . ."

The man spoke quietly: "Jem is dead, Madge."

"Dead! Dead!" She appeared to grow smaller visibly, but remained standing, a dazed appeal in her eyes. She seemed unconscious of his presence.

He had looked upon the whole scene curiously. It was not his fault that his affair with this pretty girl had led him so close to death. After a cold wind from the grave had raised his hair that night, he had hurried away secretly with his splendid Cyprian and lodged her here, for she would have none of his "charity." Since then his efforts had been quietly, though powerfully, exerted to free Smithers, a man that he had never seen until he appeared in court. His passion for the beautiful Madge had cooled, but had

given place to a profound pity. Still, he knew women—and such women—to have surprising powers of recuperation. How would he leave her?

Suddenly the scissors clattered to the floor, and she stared at him with wide eyes.

"You said they found him not guilty—yet that he is dead?"

"Yes, little girl, his big heart failed him at the verdict. He had seemed to be struggling for breath as the foreman spoke, and with the pronouncement of the verdict he dropped dead."

She shivered and pressed her hands to her eyes. After standing thus for a full minute, she whispered:

"Ah, Dick, I am very tired. Kiss me, dear."

She was her old self, vibrant, sick for love. She opened her arms, fists clenched, her bosom panting, her eyes tight shut, lips parted.

A breathless pause—the sound of a closing door—her opened, frightened eyes gazed upon an empty room.



## HAZELTINE

By C. M. WARD

**L**IST, Hazeltine,  
There's many a rhyme  
That fits that pretty name of thine.

Thy glance divine  
Thrills me like wine;  
Must I repine, belle Hazeltine?

Some little sign  
If you incline  
To change that pretty name of thine.

List, Hazeltine,  
Just one more line—  
Will you be mine, as I am thine?

"The night is fine.  
Where shall we dine?"  
Said hungry, heartless Hazeltine.

# HIDE AND SEEK

By MARTHA WHEELER

**E**RNEST SNIFFEN was a serious young man. He was serious all the way through, from the set of his derby to the click of his common sense heels, and he had an overplus of soul.

Arabella Brookes was an idle young woman. She had curly hair and a rich father, so she was happy and looked well all the time, whatever the weather and the state of the market. But she was happier and handsomer than ever one evening when she posed in some tableaux for charity. Ernest Sniffen saw her thus for the first time, but it was no charity to him: he lost his heart right there after paying admission at the door. He was captivated by Arabella's airy-fairyness, and he took for granted a depth of soul beneath; he also tried to take Arabella for better or for worse, but she would have none of him. Ernest suffered greatly, and after a time he died and went to Purgatory.

Next season Arabella caught pneumonia at a dance, and she died and went to Purgatory too. She knew it was Purgatory the minute she set foot inside the place, because she caught sight of Ernest Sniffen; of course, being in the habit of cutting him on earth, she didn't let on that she saw him now, but out of the tail of her eye she took in her surroundings with the lightning calculation that had marked her previous work.

Ernest was seated at a glistening dinner table paying compliments and telling funny stories to a stout woman in a *décolleté* gown, whom she recognized as the former head of the Female Progressive League back home.

Arabella turned in perplexity to her

attendant. "Whatever are they up to?" she inquired.

"They are learning small talk, so as to be agreeable in Heaven," the attendant said gravely.

"Bully for them!" exclaimed Arabella. "Please, may I sit as far from them as possible?"

"Your task is different," was the reply, and at once to her was given seven volumes on philosophy and seven on psychology and seven apiece on logic and international law. "In between lessons you will shake down the furnaces and manage the missionary society. This is to teach you to think enough to be agreeable in Heaven."

Arabella didn't like it, but there was no redress. In time her thoughts made her serious, and as she sat among her books or soft-footedly stepped in after a day's work distributing tracts or shaking down the furnaces, the talk of the diners floated to her ears and she grew to love the young man at the table, for the light and dash of his repartee attracted her and she took for granted a depth beneath. But he loved her not at all, and she overheard him say:

"How dull and unresponsive Arabella is these days! She might take the trouble to be polite, even if she does shake down the furnaces."

This caused her to suffer much.

Finally the time of their preparation came to an end, and perfect they stood together at the gates of Heaven. The discipline had served its purpose: each loved the other at last. "Mine?" he asked.

"Forever," she replied—and they swept inside the gates.

But in Heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage.

# IRISH SONGS

By ARTHUR STRINGER

## THE OULD WORLD'S WAY

**S**URE, many's the sailerin' lad  
Went singin' and rockin' free  
Out over the Ocean's rim  
As happy as us, ma chree!  
But many's the toime, me lad—  
Such ends the ould world brings—  
*That over the laugh and last av him*  
*'Tis the sea that rocks and swings!*

And many's the boy wid a plough  
Who'd sing at the break av day  
As he turned the mold wid his share  
And buried the grass away!  
But many's the same lad, now  
That sootherin' greensward won,  
*And over his gray bones there*  
*'Tis the grass that sings in the sun!*

## THE SISTERHOOD

I've knocked about the Sivin Seas,  
I've thraveled long and thraveled light,  
From Cardiff down to Carib keys,  
From Shanghai round to Benin Bight.

From Rotterdam to 'Frisco Bay,  
From Bristol clear to Singapore,  
I've swung and sung and had me way  
Wid wimmen that I'll see no more.

In fjord, atoll and harbor town,  
Far North, and far beyont the Line,  
I've had thim, black and white and brown—  
And shpakin' iv'ry tongue but mine!

Aye, kissin' back wid furrin words  
I'd niver know the meanin' of,  
And cooin' soft loike shleepy birds  
Wid lips so tired and full av love!



But, white or black or brown, I knew  
 Not wanst their hathen tongue or name:  
*Yet in the end I've found it's thrue*  
*Most iv'ry woman weeps the same!*

## THE WAY WID SINGIN'

Faith, niver the sail calls the frith-wind,  
 Nor the turf comethers the rain;  
 And niver the Fairy-Thorn frets for the spring,  
 Or the brae for the summer again!  
 And niver a boreen can ask for a bird,  
 Or beg for a whin-chat's strain!

Not pulled from me head are these planxties;  
 These chunes they are nothin' av men!  
 They come as the whin-chat comes in spring  
 And the grackle-thrush back to the glen!  
 They come loike the rain to the turf, me lad,  
 And the Saints know how and when!

## THE COMETHER

"Ye've not a traneeen, nor a foot like a queen,"  
 Said Creina to Oonagh McCaulter;  
 "And I'm thinkin' it queer that twice in wan year  
 Ye're leadin' a man to the altar!"

She heard Oonagh say in her shleepy soft way:  
 "'Tis niver a kiss, or a sigh!  
 Faith, 'tishn't a shmile, or a face, by a mile,  
*But the Come Hither Look in the eye!"*

## WIMMEN FOLK

Toime was I thought av wimmen, sure,  
 As made to reverince, limb be limb;  
 As something holy-like and pure  
 Thro' all the snow white lingth av thim!

I dreamed av gurls as angels, lad,  
 Wid all their wistful holy ways,  
 To leave you thremblin' when ye'd had  
 A word wid thim . . . in oulder days!

But now I've learned me topsail lore  
 And roved the sea from rim to rim,  
 I seldom wait and quake before  
 The soft and snow white lingth av thim!

For when gurls love you well, me lad,  
 They're thrue to nayther law nor letther;  
*And when they're most disheartenin' bad*  
*Ye learn to love such angels bettther!*

# MISS INDEPENDENCE

By MELVILLE CHATER

WHEN the train rolled into the Gare Montparnasse the American girl in the tailor-made suit jumped up, seized her bag and pushed through the crowd with the high head and self-reliant stride which had once moved young Pierrard to exclaim, when meeting her in the Place de l'Etoile: "Mademoiselle Kerr, I think you were meant to be a man. But what an adorable mistake!"

"Rue Blanche," called Miss Kerr to the *cocher*; then she leaned back in the taxicab, sighing wearily, "Ugh! Rue Bête Noire!" She fell to dreaming of quiet old Asvenières in the Rhone country, whence she was now returning after a two months' visit with the St. Maur girls at the Chateau de Faverges—two months of rest and desultory sketching amid the relief of unconcealed poverty.

The taxicab turned the last corner, disclosing the hated Rue Blanche, a squalid, yet hopelessly respectable vista of dingy houses interspersed with evidences of cheap trade—small grocery and fruit shops, *charcuteries*, dyeing establishments, and a line of push carts where bareheaded women moved to and fro, buying vegetables, amid a babel of argument and persuasion.

"*Des belles carottes!*"—thus ran the dismal burden. "*Du mouron! Du mouron pour les petites oiseaux!*" Katherine paid her *cocher* and turned away, breathing a sickened sigh.

The tiny top floor room to which she ascended was of the kind usually occupied by seamstresses or *femmes de ménage* at the modest rental of four francs a week. With a little ingenuity the American girl had in three hours

formed this garret into an artistic retreat. It had taken her six months to accept the society of the *sixième étage*. But poverty teaches democracy; and now she was a comrade to all in the house, from Angèle, a little *ouvrière* from the provinces, who sewed for two francs a day, to Genevieve, the haughty, a cloak model in a fashionable dressmaking establishment.

On entering, Katherine found upon her desk a letter which had been redirected from the Atelier Julien, where she had attended art classes in her more prosperous days.

"Unearthed!" she sighed, recognizing the script of Mrs. Archie Callender, whom she had known on both sides of the Atlantic. Then tears sprang to her eyes; she kissed the letter impulsively and murmured as if to something in the distance: "Watch Hill! Dear old Watch Hill!"

"Katherine, dear," ran the note, "where *have* you been keeping yourself for the last six months? I've looked high and low for you, and am sending this to the old address, hoping it may find you. Oh, I know! You're painting away somewhere, lost in your dreams and ambitions, and have forgotten all about mankind, Miss Independence! Only the other day I met young De Georgis, of the ultra-military shoulders, at the Hotel Ritz, and what do you suppose was the first thing he said? 'Tell me, Madame Callender, what has become of our beautiful Miss Independence?' You see, the nickname has clung. If this letter reaches you, you positively must come on the twenty-second. It's our usual Washington's Birthday reunion. You'll find

all the old faces there, as well as some even older ones whom I hope you haven't forgotten. We still live at No. 99 Avenue d'Iéna, and—"

There followed gossip touching mutual American friends in Paris, and a warning that the writer had promised at least half a dozen men the positive appearance of Miss Independence.

Katherine's first impulse was to tear up the letter unanswered. Things had changed since her visits in the Avenue d'Iéna. At that time she was the atelier's most promising student, with a small but sufficient bank account, and she shared a pretty apartment with Ruth and Alice Keeling in the Rue de Balzac. Now her savings were gone; she was a denizen of the Rue Blanche, reduced to the shifts of poverty and eating bitter bread as an insignificant teacher of English at five francs per lesson.

As she sat there considering the situation, again her eyes filled with tears, and she murmured chokily: "Dear old flashy, noisy New York!" Then she arose and rummaged among a pile of canvases, of which she finally chose one, an unfinished picture, and fitting it into her best frame, stepped back and gazed.

"The Last Day Out," as she had planned to call it, displayed a strip of steamer deck with a couple leaning over the rail as if in their first glimpse of the home coast. But, strangely, as she had worked over the canvas day by day its meaning had deepened until now the two faces suggested not only the sudden sighting of land, but also the sudden realization of some new, intangible thing between them. And strangely, too, the man's figure had altered beneath her brush until now she was haunted by a horrible, weak-kneed dread that, if the whole world stood before her canvas, it would point with one incriminating finger and cry with one voice:

"Bobby Sturgis!"

Katherine had first heard that name in the hotel ballroom at Watch Hill, two years before. "Now do treat him respectably," Mrs. Callender had whis-

pered. "The Sturgises have no end of money, and you'll see for yourself what a sweet, unspoiled boy he is." And presently there had stood before her a tall, light-haired youth of mild blue eyes, thin, sinewy hands and a sweet but quietly persistent smile.

"A boy—I should say so!" she had reflected with all the superiority that a girl of twenty-three feels for a mere man of twenty-four. And such he had always remained thereafter—the same charmingly modest, tenderly considerate, delightfully trustful boy adorer. Yet from the first she had felt something mature, almost masterful, in his attitude; a quiet yet grimly tenacious sympathy, as though he regarded her as a homeless child who must come at last to rely upon him. This had roused her antagonism and provoked her most perverse moods, moods through which he remained smiling and cheerful, as gently persistent as ever. At that time she was a poor student in the Art League, living at a second-rate boarding house somewhere in the West Forties, and it was her pride that had dictated the policy of concealment with which she had defended herself instinctively from the first.

The following winter when, thanks to a small legacy, she was sailing for Paris, who should turn up at the ship, still smiling, cheerful and tenderly persistent, as if not an hour had elapsed between them—who but the Sturgis boy? They talked for twenty minutes on the saloon deck; he told her everything all over again and took his medicine manfully for the third time.

"I understand," sighed young Sturgis, shaking his fair hair. "I haven't brains. I haven't anything except money. All I know about pictures is that whatever you paint is beautiful. Of course I'd no right to speak of it again. Yes, you're wonderful," he mused, regarding her with steadfast eyes. "You'll always be the Wonderful One." On the lower deck a bell was clanging mercilessly for departure. "Kay," he hastened with tremulous resolution, "you'll be over there all alone, without friends perhaps, without

—without other things. I mean," he stammered, "if you should ever need—need help; if there is ever anything I can do in the way of—of—" In his nervousness he unconsciously rattled a pocketful of silver, then turned crimson to the hair and lifted guilty, apprehensive eyes to hers. But she laughed gaily and extended her hand with some evasive consolation about always depending upon his true friendship.

"Oh, Boy," she said with a sudden rush of feeling, "you are so—you're such a—I don't know what I mean. Good-bye, Boy."

His eyes searched hers with a quiet conviction that she could not dispel. "I love you," he said simply; "I love you very much. I think you *must* turn to me some day, for some little thing." Then he smiled his quiet, tender smile, the sunlight glanced upon his fair hair and he was gone.

And in the two years that followed, Katherine had turned to his memory not once but often for something which, she had begun to find of late, was not even a little thing.

As she stood before her unfinished canvas and recalled the closing words of Mrs. Callender's note, there suddenly broke upon her miserable mood a suspicion, a wildly ridiculous hope that set the muscles knotting in her throat. Edith, she knew, had always been eager for the match. With an hysterical laugh she sat down and dashed off a reply in her boisterous, telegraphic style.

"What an old darling you are," she wrote, "to remember me all this while! Of course I'll come—best bib and tucker. Just back from the Rhone—lovely paradise without an Adam to interfere. Do have young De Georgis on hand for me. Tell him I adore shoulders. He's such harmless, languishing fun. I'm pining to dance—can hardly wait till Tuesday. Tell you all then."

At last, after five feverish days, came the night of the twenty-second. It was with palpitating heart that Katherine alighted in the Avenue d'Iéna and hurried up the steps, to be embraced

by Edith like a prodigal daughter and all but embraced by Edith's husband, who announced as the only hindrance a right arm, still in the sling, broken in the recent cup races.

Ten minutes later Miss Independence descended the staircase and entered the ballroom on Mr. Callender's good arm, in her best, slightly bored manner, with not a trace of the villainous Rue Blanche in her entire consciousness. She was industriously flirting with young De Georgis when Edith's voice broke in with, "Katherine, here's someone you've met before"; and she felt the blood surge in her ears, and found herself uttering flatly enough the exclamation of entire surprise that she had concocted while coming downstairs.

Yes, it was the same frank, boyish face of old that smiled down upon her; it was the same thin, sinewy hand that took hers with all the delicacy of reserved strength; it was the same quiet voice, almost childlike in its simplicity of enunciation, that said, as if they had parted but yesterday:

"And I didn't expect to see you here, either. In fact, I'd decided not to come. I mean, I didn't think I could," he added hurriedly. "I've been away, you know; I got back only yesterday."

There stole into his face the appealing look with which he always endeavored to cloak prevarication or excuse. Here again was Edith's hand; for Katherine guessed that upon returning he had found a note telling him of her acceptance.

"Been away?" she cried gaily. "Why, you talk like an old boulevardier! Please, how long have you been in Paris?"

"Oh, quite a long time," he returned in his simple, serious way. "Let me see! I left New York on the second of January." There was a man edging through the crowd toward them, dance card in hand. "May I have this waltz, if it isn't taken?" asked the Sturgis boy hastily.

To talk while dancing was Katherine's most decided aversion, yet now that she actually beheld the Sturgis boy in the flesh, and felt the likelihood

of seeing him again, there fell upon her the most perverse and unruly of moods. To the last bar of the waltz she chattered like some uncaged schoolgirl, and developed a vein of flippancy that had been repressed for the last six melancholy months. The music ceased and they sat down in a corner oasis of palms and flowers.

"What about your art work?" asked the Sturgis boy.

She rattled off a number of events, names and exhibitions, drawing the material from her first fat twelve months in Paris and investing it with an aura of success. Carelessly she mentioned the *Atelier Julien*.

"Oh, but you're not there now?" asked the Sturgis boy. "You see, I happened to—to drop in there, one day."

"Oh, dear, no!" She branched into some generalities concerning the outdoor school at Barbizon; then a look on his face moved her to add carelessly: "You've been there, of course?"

"Motored," he nodded with evident confusion. "A month ago. I suppose you weren't there then."

"No, indeed. I was staying with friends in the South." She talked of the chateau life in Asvenières, transmuting its simple poverty with the golden touch of illusion; and all the while she wondered deeply how long this indefatigable Sturgis boy had been upon her track, and what he had discovered of her circumstances. For, despite her best efforts at concealment, there still lurked in his manner the old, quiet, persistent pity that had always roused her antagonism, but now it was even more intolerable because she had proved a failure, and he, in some inscrutable way, seemed to be aware of it.

They did not meet again until the first cotillion figure after supper. In the center of the floor there was planted a cherry tree, beneath which stood little Bertie Callender dressed in Colonial uniform, in his hand a hatchet, across his breast the classic phrase: "I cannot tell a lie." From the branches of the tree fluttered red,

white and blue ribbons, which were pulled off by the dancers at a given signal; and each ribbon bore half of some proverb containing the word "truth." At a second signal the dancers intermingled, each chanting his or her half-motto until the corresponding ribbon was found. The babel of tongues had waned to a few yet unmated cries of "Stranger than fiction," "Will rise again," and the like, when Katherine encountered the Sturgis boy wandering about with a puzzled look on his face.

"If no one has found you yet," he announced, "I'm not going any further. I've got something here that doesn't mean anything at all." He displayed a white ribbon bearing these words: "truth, beauty." "I don't see how it's possible to complete that, do you?"

"And I've got a motto," she laughed, "that seems absolutely complete by itself. By the way, did you notice this?" She lifted his ribbon and showed on its reverse side the legend: "The bearer solemnly promises to speak nothing but truth during the cotillion figures. Between partners any question is admissible." "Do you think," she asked, "that we'll find it very hard?"

But before any questions could be asked the leader signaled them to dance. When they sat out the Boy said, as though he had been thinking things over:

"I'm glad you like it here and feel that your work is coming on. Oh, by the way, there was a man I met on the boat. He buys a lot of pictures, and I happened to mention yours. Do you know, I believe you could sell him some things if—if you have any to sell."

"What is his name?" she asked.

"His name?" The Boy's face clouded with a suspiciously appealing look. "Why, Jardine—that's his name."

"Edward Jardine!" she cried; then a glance of intelligence flashed between them and the Boy colored to his hair. For they both knew that Jardine was a picture dealer, but what the Boy did not know was that, more than once, Jardine had politely informed Miss Kerr

that there seemed to be little demand among the buyers for her work. "Yes, I know him," she said with repressed merriment, while her would-be patron fidgeted and blushed more deeply each moment until the unendurable situation was broken by common laughter.

"Well, what if he is a dealer?" asked the Boy stoutly. "I did ask him to look you up and buy your best picture. I just wanted something of yours to take home with me—that's all."

"There, you've transgressed the rules of the game already," she said severely. "I'm ashamed of you! But, after all, it was only a harmless transparency. Oh, Boy, I don't believe that for the life of you you could tell one big, fat, black lie. Now, you've no idea how deceitful I can be."

"I always knew you were cleverer than I," he returned simply. "I dare say you could deceive me whenever you tried. I'd like to understand you, but all I really care about is that I love you, and that's better than understanding. You said once you thought I'd forget. Well, I tried to put you out of my mind, but somehow you always came back again. Once, down at Ormond Beach last winter in the races, I had just two more miles to go and one more car to pass—I was tremendously excited and only thinking how I could skin past that Ritz-Mather, when suddenly I saw you in your tan coat and sailor hat, standing right in the middle of the straight fifty yards ahead. I threw on the brakes, the car skidded and over I went. Of course, the Ritz-Mather won. My people were awfully disappointed; they told me afterwards that there wasn't a living thing there, and the doctor called it overstrained nerves. But I know that something on the course must have reminded me of the beach at Watch Hill. Well, in January I couldn't stand it any longer, so I came across and have been looking for you ever since. Oh, Kay, if you could only tell me that you're sick and tired of the life here, and want to come home! You know I said, that last day, that I felt you'd come to me some time for something or other. Isn't there

anything I can do to—to help you? Tell me, where are you living?"

Inwardly she was torn by an impulse toward truth, but the words "Rue Blanche" defied utterance.

"In an apartment house," she returned carelessly, adjusting her gloves, "with two other American girls. We're not far from the Place de l'Opéra. It's so convenient to the theaters, you know." After a pause she added: "Boy, I'm afraid I'm the same old impossible person. I've never relied upon anyone for anything, all my life, and now it's too late to learn. Do you know what they call me here? Miss Independence! I wish I could say it wasn't an appropriate name, but I'm afraid it is."

The last figure had commenced, and they danced their part of it in silence; then the music melted into "Auld Lang Syne" and finally died away, and nothing was left but the sound of good nights and a distant view of cloaked, scarfed figures. Katherine held out her hand. The Boy took it as if nothing had passed between them, saying with a trustful tenacity:

"Kay, I'm glad that I came across and found you. If I send Jardine, you'll sell him a picture, won't you? No, not good-bye. I feel sure I shall see you again some time. Good night, Kay."

She fled upstairs, for she was in no mood to contradict him. A few moments later when she descended in her wraps no one would have dreamed that Miss Independence was longing for the solitary darkness of her *fiacre* and the relief of unrestrained tears.

"I'm so glad you came, dear," said Edith. "Bobby Sturgis will be here in a moment. He's going to see you home."

"Is he?" faltered Katherine. Her voice felt as though it had been cut through by a razor. "That's very thoughtful, but I couldn't think of troubling him. Why, it's nothing; I'm used to running around alone, you know." Turning to go, she found herself faced by the long-coated figure of the Sturgis boy.



"Mrs. Callender tells me you came alone," he said politely. "My cab is waiting outside. I hope you'll allow me to take you home."

"Oh, I'm ever so much obliged," she laughed, conscious of suppressed vexation on Edith's part, "but really I couldn't think of taking you out of your way. And then my cab is here—"

"I asked for it," he returned, "but it doesn't seem to have come yet. And really it's not out of my way; you said you lived near the—"

"Not come?" she interposed, averting the dangerous reference to her address. "That's strange! Why, I can't understand it." Then Edith clinched the situation with a renewal of good night sentiments that admitted of no further delay; and as she stood on the threshold, waving a hand after the pair, there lurked in her eye a triumphant, matchmaking gleam.

"Near the Place de l'Opéra, I think you said," observed the Sturgis boy as he helped Katherine into the *fiacre*, but she declined to hear. Despairingly she plunged into an animated discussion of art—art ancient, medieval and modern, impressionistic and realistic, sacred and profane, while Sturgis leaned back and sighed over his utter ignorance. And meantime every word, look and gesture of the gay lie that she had enacted all the evening fell upon her proud heart like a fiery rain; for inwardly she was walking her own little hell, whose nether circle was the Rue Blanche. She experienced all the sensations of a kleptomaniac who is being driven to police headquarters for identification.

Of a sudden there flashed across her despair a stratagem so perfect that her artistic nature thrilled with creative pride.

"Heigho!" she yawned. "I think I shall sleep well tonight. Ask him to turn into the Avenue de l'Opéra, will you, please? I hope I'm not taking you much out of your way."

He transmitted the order. As they sat watching the broad, electric-lighted

thoroughfare glide past, their conversation waned; it resembled the silence of parting lovers. In reality, however, Katherine was absorbed in the details of her plan. Mrs. Keeling, with whose daughters Katherine had lived during her palmy days, had joined her girls six months before, and the trio occupied a suite in a handsome apartment house situated on the Avenue de l'Opéra. Katherine visited them frequently—she had spent three days there just prior to her departure for the Rhone country—and knew that she was welcome at all times and hours. To be deposited at the portecochère, or, better still, to wait inside until he had departed and then charter a *fiacre* of her own for the Rue Blanche—this would be a truly magnificent saving of appearances.

"Here we are at last!" she said cheerily and pointed ahead to an imposing frontage which loomed over the arcade of plate glass-fronted stores built at its base. Sturgis was leaning back in the shadow, still silent, as if absorbed in thought; apparently he had not heard. Katherine rapped sharply on the window.

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed, starting up in evident embarrassment. "I thought you meant that building away beyond. What, this one? This one opposite?" He peered hesitatingly through the window, confused, it seemed, as to his surroundings. At last he opened the door of the *fiacre* and helped Katherine out. There fell upon them a peculiar, strained silence; Katherine concealed her nervousness by a slightly audible yawn. Sturgis rang. As they stood waiting for the door to open their glances met. His eyes dropped instantly and he said in a queer, helpless, apologetic voice, "I—I thought you were going on a good deal further than this."

"No, thank you," she laughed. "I've just strength enough left to climb three flights of stairs and fall into bed. Of course the elevator's stopped. Oh, dear, I wish I lived on the first floor rear, instead of the third floor front." She glanced up at

the darkened windows; then she became aware that the Boy's eyes were fixed intently upon hers and that he trembled to the fingers. Never before had there been between them such a leave-taking; the atmosphere seemed positively electric.

"I'd ask you to call some time," she said sweetly, "but we're not certain of remaining here. You see, one of the girls is thinking of Rome."

"Thanks. I'd like to have called." There was horrible suspense in his voice, yet he managed to smile faintly.

"I do hope I haven't taken you much out of your way," she pursued, afraid of the silence.

"Not much." He seemed to have mastered himself, and his smile waxed into affable comradeship. "Not a bit, really, I assure you—not one bit!"

The door swung back. "Good night!" smiled Katherine and turned to go. He caught her hand. "Wait!" he cried feverishly, then broke off with some unspoken message in his beseeching eyes. At length he faltered: "You're—you're all right, are you? You've got your key?"

She nodded carelessly. At arm's length their hands slipped apart, but his eyes still clung desperately to hers; then a soft smile lit all his face, a smile of something akin to ownership, so quiet, so loving, so tenderly protective that it fell upon her as though his lips had lightly touched her brow.

"Good night, Kay," he whispered—the confident good night that means "Till tomorrow!" Then the gate clicked between them and she was gone.

For ten minutes, perhaps, he stood there gazing upward, then suddenly one of the dark, distant windows glowed forth upon the night. "Ah!" he breathed, and, turning, strolled away with a happy face.

"Hi, monsieur!" the *cocher* called after him. "Two francs, if you please!"

"By George!" laughed the Boy; "forgot all about you—hanged if I didn't! Here y'are, cabby! It's a fine night; I think I'll walk. Change? Oh, bother the change!"

And he strolled on, softly whistling the latest waltz. Once or twice he paused and looked back as if the far shining light were some beacon which he was loth to lose; then he turned the corner and looked back no more. He was bound for a hotel—some hotel, any hotel—yet street after street slipped by and still he wandered, whistling softly. He did not notice the names of the streets; he did not even see the long rows of electric lamps, for far overhead the stars were shining. By and by he found himself in the dingy, desolate heights of Montmartre, and then his quiet smile deepened as he strolled onward, scanning window after window, as if picturing some imaginary face behind each pane. At last, as he entered a small, cheap square, someone approached and begged him for the price of a bed. In his life he had seen thousands of such miserable, ragged crones and passed them by, uncaring, but now there suddenly woke in him a strange new sense of unutterable pity. Turning his pockets inside out, he heaped all they contained into her two hands. She stared up at his face like a crazed creature. "There, that's all right," he said, and turned away. Next moment she had hobbled across to the bench where he had seated himself to wait for morning.

"Monsieur," she whined, "I will pray for you always. Surely some angel must have sent you."

He shook his head and smiled. "No," he said, summoning up the best of his imperfect French, "it wasn't an angel; it was just a woman."

Meanwhile Miss Independence slept luxuriously in the Avenue de l'Opéra. For as the door snapped behind her she had realized with a sudden start that it was locked and that she could not gain egress without applying to the *concierge*—an awkward predicament at two o'clock in the morning. There was nothing left, then, but to rouse the Keelings. Boldly she crossed the courtyard, passed the porter's lodge unquestioned and climbed two flights of stairs. At the Keelings' door the

panic of a faint-hearted burglar seized her; nevertheless she rang—rang and rang again, but there was no reply. At last, on the point of retreating in despair, she recalled the family custom of leaving the key under the door mat for absent members. She stooped and felt; by the blind luck of the headstrong, her fingers closed upon something flat and cold. Beyond doubt the girls had gone to some ball and had not yet returned. Very quietly she let herself in, pushing the key back under the door behind her, tiptoed down the corridor to the spare room, then undressed and tumbled into bed.

And as she settled down there floated through her mind all of that night's scenes and doings, the Boy's advances and her own foolishly proud evasions. Why had she been born so independent, so horribly independent?

"Oh, Boy," she sighed, sitting upright, "if you could only see through it all, how sick I am of myself, how I'm only waiting for you to *make* me depend on you! Boy, Boy, if you'd only force me into accepting things, or humiliate me terribly, or take me by the shoulders and *shake* me into saying, 'I love you'!"

She sank back with a vehement sob. And as she dozed off, the Boy's face returned with that last tenderly protective look; it hovered over her, soothing her into a sense of trust in all things. Somehow his quiet presence seemed wonderfully real and near; it almost haunted the place as the scent of flowers clings to a room after they themselves are gone.

"I'll always love—always love this room," murmured Katherine drowsily. "Good night, Boy."

She started wide awake amid broad daylight, with the sense of having overslept. Jumping out of bed, she peered through the shade. Sunshine and gay life flooded the Avenue and a distant clock was striking—was it nine or ten? Within there was utter silence, but Katherine knew the Keeling girls' luxurious habits on the morning after a dissipation. Instead of arousing them with a demand for clothes, she donned

her ball dress, smiling to think of her sensational entrance at breakfast.

As she picked up her dance card, which Sturgis had produced from his pocket during their homeward drive, there slipped from between the leaves a note in Edith Callender's handwriting. "You simply must come"—these were the phrases that caught her eye—"I hear she's existing somewhere in that horrible Montmartre . . . Can't you knock this art nonsense out of her head?"

Katherine flung down the note, choking with rage and mortification. Sturgis then had known the truth through all of last night's hideous comedy! Panting for fresh air and action, she dashed from the room and up the corridor. Everything was strangely peaceful and still; she might have been the Sleeping Beauty prematurely awakened. Somehow the dining room did not seem quite the same as usual; she noticed some unfamiliar sporting prints, a row of beer steins on the sideboard and two churchwarden pipes crossed above it. The mantel held an American traveling clock, whose hands pointed to eleven. She caught her breath and strove to think. Just then there entered a strange maid, who drew back in confusion, almost dropping her armful of china.

"What is it?" demanded Katherine. "Why, is there nobody at home?"

"No, madame," faltered the girl, "no one at all. I don't know what can have happened, for I put the key where it could easily be found. You see, last night monsieur went out forgetting his keys, and—"

Katherine sank into a chair. "The Keelings," she cried, "where are they?" Just then a step resounded in the corridor, and there appeared in the doorway a long-coated figure. She heard a gasp, "Oh, Lord!" then the Boy came forward, flushed but self-possessed, and bowed politely.

"I very much regret—" he began in his execrable French. Evidently it was some invention for the maid's benefit, but at this point she effected a discreet disappearance. "I—I thought

you'd have gone by now," he faltered. "I sent word to the girl this morning to tell you that everyone was away. I meant that you should never know." The shame of exposed guilt flooded his brow for a moment of poignant silence, then he lifted miserable, appealing eyes to hers and gasped: "The Keelings left Paris six weeks ago. They sublet to me, furnished. It's my—it's my apartment."

Katherine turned upon him, her blood throbbing furiously. She could not speak; she could not think. Of a sudden she had lost all; her strength, her subterfuges, her independence, her proud self-sufficiency had been stripped from her in an instant; her individuality seemed shattered.

"Shameful!" she cried. "Cruel, cruel! You had no right—you should have told me—" She sank into a chair and covered her face in utter humiliation.

"I know it," said the Boy at length,

"but when you said that it was *your* apartment I—why, I couldn't have contradicted you for worlds. You see, it was the first time you had ever needed anything of mine. I just walked around all night and—and imagined your sleeping here. I thought you'd never know." He knelt by her side and murmured brokenly: "Oh, Kay, Kay, I'm afraid you must hate me!"

Impulsively she caught his arms, crying, "No, no, Boy—not that!" Then she looked up, and at the sight of his face her eyes filled with the tears of long waiting. "It's only that I'm afraid," she smiled, "yes, very much afraid, Boy, that I love you!"

And when the maid returned she found them—a strange, sunlit pair in evening dress and ball costume—bending studiously over the breakfast table whereon, end to end, lay two white, gilt-lettered ribbons, each of which formed half of the completed line:

"Beauty is truth; truth, beauty."



## FROM THE JOURNAL OF MADAME LEANDRE

By WOLJESKA TINDOLPH

**I**N early youth we demand that a friendship be absolute, that every chord of a friend's soul be tuned in harmony with our own. Later only we learn that subtlest, keenest delight lies in drawing melodies from resistant instruments.

Our book shelves are the toilet tables of our intellects. There we intensify our whiteness with the sweet white purity of Lamb and Goldsmith—and the vivid color of our blush with the passionate rouge of Flaubert and D'Annunzio—and the charm of our smile with coquettish beauty spots from Ovid and Mendès—and the seduction of our languor with strange, subtle perfumes from Oscar Wilde and Verlaine.

No matter how spiritual a love may be, it always must crave to express itself physically.

If you are sure of yourself, you can afford not to be sure of your lover.

# THE DECREE NISI

By JOSHUA BATES

## CHARACTERS

SIR ADRIAN HUDSPETH, BART.

DICK BLUNDELL

LINDA, LADY HUDSPETH

HARPER (a maid)

PLACE: *London.*

TIME: *The Present.*

**S**CENE—A private sitting room at the Marlborough Hotel. There is a door at the right leading to an adjoining room; another at the left giving onto the corridor. There is a fireplace at the right and before it a deep settee with cushions. Near this is a small table. There is a writing table at the left and a chair. The room is handsomely appointed. It is late afternoon in February. A fire is burning. Otherwise there is no light.

(After the curtain rises a few seconds elapse before a knock is heard at the left door. A pause follows. A key is then inserted and turned. LINDA HUDSPETH enters. She is a beautiful woman of about thirty, very pale and weary. She goes to the door at the right, opens it and looks into the room, then closes the door and rings impatiently. A pause. She rings again. HARPER enters breathlessly from the door at the left.)

LINDA (with irritation)

Where were you? Why were you not here?

HARPER (panting)

Stubbs, milady—I was watching for Stubbs. He—he promised to bring me the—the verdict.

LINDA

That will do. Order tea. (HARPER goes out at the left. LINDA seats herself on the settee before the fire and leans her head back among the cushions. She closes her eyes. Some seconds elapse. Then speaking to herself in a ruminating whisper) And, for Justice, they set up a little cock sparrow in a large hemp wig! (She laughs a little wildly; checks herself suddenly; goes over to the writing

table, turns on the light and writes. HARPER enters, followed by a hotel servant with a tea tray which he places on the table near the settee. LINDA hastily addresses and seals a letter. She hands it to the servant.) See that this letter is delivered at once. (Exit servant. LINDA rings. HARPER enters from room at the right.) You may pack my small dressing bag.

HARPER

Yes, milady. Oh, milady—Stubbs would like Your Ladyship to know—(simpering) 'im as has sich a tender 'art, milady, that it near broke to have to say the things 'e did in court about Your Ladyship, but as 'e 'as a tender conscience, too—

LINDA (*sharply*)

That will do. Attend to the dressing bag.

HARPER

Yes, milady.

(HARPER goes out at the right. LINDA laughs drearly. She goes to the tea tray, pours out tea mechanically and drinks. After considerable time a knock is heard at the left door.)

LINDA

Come in! (*Enter the hotel servant, card on salver. Without taking up the card*) I am at home to no one—unless Sir Adrian Hudspeth. (*The servant is about to go out, when LINDA stops him, picks up the card and looks at it.*) Show Mr. Blundell in.

(DICK BLUNDELL enters. He is a frank, good-looking man of about thirty-five. LINDA greets him cordially. Exit servant as slowly as possible.)

DICK

This is indiscreet, I know.

LINDA

Nothing matters now.

DICK

I never dreamed the affair would take the turn it has! I was afraid you might disappear hurriedly. I myself must leave England tonight—tomorrow at the latest. (*Speaking with some diffidence.*) Will you—will you come with me, or—join me at your own convenience?

LINDA (*looking at him for a moment in astonishment*)

My dear friend, let's talk of the weather. Have some tea.

DICK (*taking the cup from her hand and looking into her eyes a moment*)

A mood?

LINDA

Now that my reputation, like a mantle, has been lifted from my shoulders, I feel it heavy on my hands. Sounds like a—a paradox or something, doesn't it! (*She laughs nervously.*)

DICK (*earnestly*)

I wish you would answer my question: Will you come with me, or join me later on?

LINDA (*lightly*)

And do you think that you can put the "mantle" about me again? Why,

Dick, it would be sliding off at every corner that we met an old acquaintance! You would be spending your time picking it up out of the mud! You'd get so weary of it, Dick! In the end you'd have to carry it over one arm, in despair, *all the dusty way!* (*Shaking her head.*) No, Dick, you'd soon get tired. Besides—how about Susan Law—pretty Susan, with eyes like a misty morning, eh?

DICK (*with an impatient gesture*)

Why talk of her?

LINDA (*in a tone of banter*)

Do you mean to tell me that pretty Susan, between her Yorkshire hedges, in the cloisters of the vicarage garden, has heard of all your naughty doings, um?

DICK (*slowly*)

She's—chucked me, or her father has for her. It's all the same. Besides—

LINDA (*gently*)

Poor Dick! Besides—?

DICK

Besides—

LINDA

Yes?

DICK

There's—you.

LINDA (*with a little laugh*)

Oh, yes! I had forgotten! . . . There's—me! (*A pause follows.*) Of course I am in love with you? The jury, after much deliberation, seemed to be quite satisfied on that point—I wonder why? (*She looks at him intently.*) I suppose you're better looking than Adrian—what do you think?

DICK (*with a short laugh, straightening instinctively*)

Can you not, even now, be serious?

LINDA

Why should I? The fire is cosy; the tea is fairly good; the buttered toast might certainly be hotter; and we have just returned from a farce! (*DICK looks at her gloomily.*) Do you remember any of the points, Dick? I do! When Cook swore—*swore*—she saw you stealing up the back stairs at four in the morning, the Judge asked her feelingly why *she* was not in bed at that hour; and she answered that she thought you were a burglar and was looking for a poker to



attack you! (*Laughing.*) Don't you remember? The court screamed with delight. Cook was at her pinnacle of glory. She felt herself a public favorite. At that moment the little ball of the world rolled at her feet. I shall never forget the quiver of the feather in her bonnet! You have said many times she is an artist. This dish was somewhat highly spiced for us, but who were we? She had her Public!

DICK

For heaven's sake, Linda—

LINDA (*lightly*)

Didn't you laugh? *I did.* I couldn't help it! And then you remember Stubbs, how he—

DICK

Linda, for heaven's sake, don't we all want to forget it? Haven't we had enough—

LINDA

Considering the quality, there might certainly have been some cuts. Even I blushed!

DICK (*seriously*)

My dear, what are you going to do?

LINDA (*with irritation*)

Don't say "my dear." It is only allowable when the bloom has worn off marriage. Drop the "my." It suggests undisputed possession. Today, of all days, it is unfortunate. (*In a practical tone.*) Have you any morals?

DICK (*stiffly*)

Certainly.

LINDA

You have the advantage of me, then! At eighteen I would have reddened at the bare suggestion of any man kissing my cheek. At twenty-eight I am pale at the dreadful thought that I shall never be kissed again! (*Dick draws himself up.*) You! Oh, yes—I wasn't thinking of you. The usages of society have set out a plan of action for you, and—you, perhaps, are willing to follow it. Would you like to kiss me *now*? (*She holds up her cheek.*) Of course you won't! You are anxious only for that which is denied you. Now that you are expected to take it, you will not crane your neck further outside your collar than is comfortable! And why? Am I not as pretty as I was—say, six months ago?

(*She goes to the glass on the wall and looks at herself meditatively.*) A little paler, perhaps; a little worn; a little more than six months older. But surely not so different! Come! Is it because my cheek is a little less rounded? Is it because my lips are a little less red? Are my eyes inclined to be jaded? (*She sighs and turns away from the glass.*) Or is it because six months ago I was the wife of Adrian Hudspeth, and forbidden fruit? Was it because I was not yours, and could never be yours, that you wanted me so? It was a poor compliment. You should have taken counsel of the Fox in the fable. *He* was a philosopher! And is it only now that the grapes are sour? *Your* philosophy is clumsy! (*Pause.*) I'm very tired, Dick. Good-bye. (*She holds out her hand to him without rising.*)

DICK (*stiffly, without noticing her hand or moving*)

You make it very difficult for me to set forth any views of mine. In fact, I can only see as far as my duty; beyond that is a blank.

LINDA (*coldly*)

And what, pray, do you consider your duty, that you should set it forth at such a moment?

DICK

I had one reason in coming here to-day, one only. You seem to take a strained and curious view of life—of my thoughts and actions, at any rate. I am leaving England tonight—to-morrow if you prefer it. Will you come with me? Or will you join me later on?

LINDA

My limitations forbid my following you. Explain yourself.

DICK

The situation is clear enough.

LINDA (*putting her hand to her forehead as if to collect her thoughts*)

You ask me—expect me—to leave England with you, or join you later on? Why?

DICK (*with some hesitation, looking at her anxiously*)

Are you forgetting? I am the—the—

LINDA (*with passion, stopping him*)

Great heavens, no! The ugly word

has haunted me for months. Is it usual, then, for the—correspondent to carry off the victim? Is that his prize for good conduct, or his punishment for bad?

DICK (*stiffly*)

It is the gentlemanly thing.

LINDA

Oh, Dick, how plain I must have grown!

DICK

I came here in a very different spirit; but you seem to treat the matter so lightly, and as of so slight consequence, that—

LINDA (*softening*)

Dick, dear, you don't mean to say that you—are asking—expecting—me to marry you?

DICK (*indignantly*)

What other course did you suppose I was about to take?

LINDA (*laughing incredulously*)

You must be out of your mind, Dick!

DICK

Good God, Linda, the subject is not a laughable one!

LINDA (*still laughing softly*)

Oh, my dear Dick, let it be later on, *much* later on. I am in no hurry to tie another knot. Besides—I don't think you would make a husband at all! You are very well as a friend; as a friend most admirable! (*Lightly.*) As a husband—well—the duty done, as you put it, and afterwards—a blank! You see, I have known you so well as a bachelor! I should be always finding you out. It would be a parallel case to that of the old woman who went to the sentry box to look for her daughter. She had been there herself, you see.

DICK (*turning fiercely*)

Do you mean to tell me that you don't know I love you?

LINDA

Oh-h, Dick, you take my breath away! Now it is really getting interesting!

DICK (*coming to her and drawing her to him*)

And you loved me, too, six months ago!

LINDA (*struggling to release herself*)  
I—really—do—believe—I did!

DICK

And why not now?

LINDA (*seriously*)

If I thought you were a man to suffer deeply, I should be sorrier than I am. As it is, I'm sorry—very sorry—if I give you pain. Oh, I was vain! I was vain, Dick! I was not the sort of woman to make any man happy, and I have made Adrian bitterly wretched! I never knew it, really, until I saw him in the court room, trying to look as if he didn't care. His eyes met mine unexpectedly. A hundred years of knowing could not have told me half as much as that—that one swift look! I knew then how he had loved me. I never knew till then. And it was just because I never knew it, and wanted love so much, that I let you love me as you did—six months ago. But I have seen that look! It was today. So, Dick, dear Dick, don't tell me any longer that you love me. Don't you know you're talking to a married woman?

DICK (*pleadingly*)

Linda, Linda, when you told me that six months ago there was some meaning in it. Things are different now.

LINDA

How—different?

DICK (*in a tone of astonishment, stepping back*)

Good heavens! Dear little woman, you must be overtired. A good night's rest and you will understand the situation better.

LINDA (*in a low voice, but with much determination*)

A moment, Dick. Sit down. (DICK takes a chair opposite her.) No doubt I am a little tired, and my nerves considerably unstrung, but my mind is clear enough upon the situation. If you think that I consider myself any freer now than I did six months ago, you are seriously mistaken.

DICK (*earnestly*)

But, my dear little woman, the law has annulled your marriage! You are a free woman.

LINDA (*quietly*)

No, I am a bondswoman still. I love Adrian. Has that ever occurred to you?

DICK (*in astonishment*)

You—love—Adrian Hudspeth! It's preposterous! (*He is about to rise.*)

LINDA

Stay! The subject is worth attention. Yes, I love him. I have never loved him so much as now—now that he has insulted me, degraded me, dragged me through the mire of disreputability; driven me from his house out to the wilderness. Whatever his anger has been, and is, it is the human weakness of a very human man. He has cast me out—not because he hates me, but because he loves me; not with a little love, but with a great one; not with a perfect love yet, but with a human one.

DICK (*cynically*)

He knew that I was in the wilderness.

LINDA

True—and he thinks I love you. He wants to make me happy, poor Adrian! And he is so unhappy himself! (*Dick rises, laughing bitterly, and walks to the fireplace.*) Do you suppose that I will permit a dozen men, whether they are law abiding or whether they are not, and half a dozen servants—God forgive them!—without moral fiber, to upset my ideals? Or a little man in a hemp wig—to symbolize Wisdom—with a bad digestion and a taste for satire, to debase me in my own eyes? The world goes about with a bandage over one eye. It has so much to do with the visible eye that it forgets to pay any heed to the other. It is what I see of Adrian with the invisible eye that I love in him. It is what he sees of me with the visible eye that he loves and is jealous of and has cast away.

DICK (*stiffening his back and putting his hands in his pockets*)

It is ridiculous to look at things from a pinnacle. You have to mix with men and women. In the sight of the world you no longer belong to Hudspeth, but to me. Hudspeth has set you free. He expects the usual thing

of me, and the usual thing of you. You are no longer his wife in his eyes, or in the eyes of the world.

LINDA (*quietly and with dignity*)

And in my own eyes? He doesn't know that my soul is bound to his, because he has not looked into his own soul yet to see. When he needs me I shall know, and I shall come. Do you think that I shall know if I defile my soul while I am waiting? Oh, Dick, Dick, my heart is breaking! And yet—and yet I half believe I am only beginning to know what actual happiness means! I think that for all of us, Dick, this hideous divorce case will be the doing instead of the undoing. It is a wall dividing flesh from spirit. On one side of the wall glows the body; the tempest of passion; the joy of life; the pride of the eyes. On the other side gleams the spirit, full of the fire of sacrifice, of aspiration, of renunciation. Oh, Dick, how can you dream that on the one side I belonged to Adrian and on the other side to you? (*A knock is heard at the door at the left, which is thrown open by a servant, who enters with a card on a salver. LINDA takes up the card and inclines her head. She shows the card to DICK, who turns and goes up on the right. HUDSPETH enters. He is a distinguished looking man of about forty-five. He is pale and haggard, but outwardly calm. The two men bow coldly.*)

HUDSPETH

You sent for me. I am at your service. (*DICK is about to leave. LINDA stops him.*)

LINDA

Wait, Dick. This is, I know, perhaps a little awkward; but I will risk that. I should like to have some sort of an understanding before we all three separate and go our different ways. (*HUDSPETH looks at her sharply.*) I am not going to ask forgiveness—I have done nothing, as yet, to deserve it (*HUDSPETH inclines*)—unless I ask it of Dick, here, and of poor little Susan Law. I am obliged to you, Adrian, for giving me the opportunity of testing Dick's possibilities as a husband. (*She laughs lightly.*) My courage forbids that,

though I must say, in justice, that Dick has done his best to give me confidence. Haven't you, Dick? As for you, Adrian, I hope you are fully satisfied with the result of your investigations. You and Dick have crossed swords over my body, but the weapon you used was not of steel, which is true, but the poisoned tongues of the morally diseased. (*Despairingly.*) Oh, I wish I could make you understand each other—and me! But I see it's hopeless now! Really, it is all such a preposterous misunderstanding! Good-bye, Dick. Please forgive—if you can. (*She gives DICK her hand, over which he bows low and goes out. She seats herself before the fire and motions HUDSPETH to a chair. He sits.*) You don't look the least bit pleased at getting what you've fought so hard, and spent so much money, to obtain. (*She leans toward him and looks into his face.*) Aren't you glad, Adrian?

HUDSPETH (*speaking in low, biting tones*)

You seem extraordinarily concerned about a man whose happiness appears to have been of little consequence hitherto. I hope your intention in bringing me here has not been to discuss the proceedings of the last few days.

LINDA

No; nor do I want to.

HUDSPETH

I am grateful to you for having given me an opportunity to ask you if there is anything I can do in the settlement or arrangement of your affairs and your future.

LINDA (*coldly*)

Thank you, no. My solicitors will see to the one; I myself, to the other. (*There is silence, during which LINDA stares into the fire, and HUDSPETH stares at LINDA. She turns quickly and meets his eyes. They hold each other for a few moments so. HUDSPETH rises quickly.*)

HUDSPETH (*harshly*)

The situation is ludicrous.

LINDA (*laughing nervously*)

When one comes to analyze it, it certainly is. Are you going? (*She rises and holds out her hand.*) Good-bye.

HUDSPETH (*in a strained voice, quickly, and without touching her hand*)

Don't you bear me—any—grudge for—for having brought this—affair to a crisis?

LINDA (*gently*)

Not the least in the world, Adrian. I think perhaps it's for the best, after all. You would always have gone on suspecting me. It's a pity, though, that we should have set so vulgarly to work over the separation: two men quarreling in public over the body of a woman—for that's what it amounts to! It's all very sordid—all very low—and it will take a long time to rise out of the mud.

HUDSPETH (*with a gesture as if to waive the subject*)

I should like to say also before I go that—I regret having brought this publicity upon you; that, guilty or—or innocent (*LINDA moves toward him, but he waves her back*) you hardly deserve the horrors of the last few days.

LINDA (*a trifle stiffly*)

Thank you.

HUDSPETH

Don't be bitter. I'm sorry.

LINDA

That's so like a man! A hurricane which lasts a week; an "I'm sorry!" reluctantly spoken, and taking two seconds to say, and the woman must kneel at the hem of his garment—or he is mortally injured! (*HUDSPETH turns to go. LINDA quickly, as if catching at a straw.*) Why—why do you say you are sorry?

HUDSPETH (*in a hard voice*)

Because, under any circumstances, I should consider it incumbent upon me to do so.

LINDA (*ironically*)

Certainly, it is more gentlemanly to say so.

HUDSPETH (*in a hard voice*)

Yes. (*LINDA laughs.*) Of course you do not forgive me. That would have to be a free gift. I do not ask it—or expect it. (*He moves nearer to the door.*)

LINDA (*quietly*)

You need not ask it. It is yours. I have forgiven you. I have never borne you any ill will. But you—you

have not forgiven me for what you believe I have done?

HUDSPETH (*slowly*)

I—cannot. You ask too much.

LINDA (*quickly*)

I do not ask it.

HUDSPETH

To forgive, one must be wholly indifferent.

LINDA (*breathlessly*)

Or love surpassing well. (*There is silence, during which HUDSPETH looks intently at LINDA.*)

HUDSPETH (*as if throwing off a momentary aberration*)

I know I have no claim upon the knowledge of your future, but I should be glad to know what you are thinking—planning.

LINDA

My thoughts are chaos. I have no plans—in the sense in which you question me. I am going to the mountain peaks, where the wind will blow me free of this malaria. I am tired of crawling in the airless hollows.

HUDSPETH (*with diffidence*)

I have placed a small sum of money with your solicitors.

LINDA (*quickly*)

I sha'n't want money at the mountain peaks; the sun there would shame it out of sight. Money won't buy the sun, nor yet the wind. (*In a whisper.*) I want to stand face to face with Death, Eternity, and—God.

HUDSPETH (*in a horrified whisper*)

You are not going to—kill yourself!

LINDA (*laughing softly*)

Oh, no, no, no! I think that I am only just beginning to know that life is good, and the world was made for me.

HUDSPETH (*still in the same way*)

You—you are not going to lead a life of recklessness! You are not going to sink deeper in the—mire!

LINDA (*interrupting him, laughing softly and shaking her head*)

Didn't I tell you I am going to the mountain peaks? Didn't I say the world is made for me? Not the world as I have known it—as you know it; "our world," as we were pleased to call it; the narrow, satin-lined coffin into

which we were born. But just the sunlit meadows; just the dark and rugged heights, the sea, the sky, the sun, and moon and stars, the little clouds, too, and the awful tempests, the grassy mounds, under which dust and ashes lie shut up in wood and iron—the way that you and I shall lie one day: you, most likely, in the wood and iron; I, I pray God, closer to the mold. (*Her voice sinks to a whisper. Nervous tension must be evident.*) Perhaps in the centuries to come the winds will blow our ashes into mingling. But shall we know—shall we know? (*She sways. For an instant HUDSPETH holds out an arm supporting her as, half fainting, she sits.*)

HUDSPETH (*with passionate gentleness*)

You are worn out! Try to forget this hideous nightmare. (*Speaking with difficulty, but rapidly.*) If—at any time you—should—need me, do not be afraid, do not be afraid. . . (*He presses a bell. HARPER enters from the right. In a harsh voice*) Attend to Her Ladyship. She is faint. (*He goes out at the left quickly. HARPER takes a bottle of smelling salts from the mantelpiece and carries it hurriedly to her mistress. LINDA places it upon the table.*)

LINDA

Have you packed my small dressing bag?

HARPER

Yes, milady.

LINDA (*feverishly*)

Bring it to me. And my hat and traveling wrap, and gloves.

(*Exit HARPER at the right. LINDA goes to the glass and arranges her hair. HARPER enters with bag and wraps. LINDA puts on her hat. HARPER places the wrap about her. LINDA takes the gloves and draws them on slowly. She takes the bag from HARPER and moves toward the door at the left.*)

HARPER

Oh, milady! Am I not to come with Your Ladyship? (*LINDA shakes her head.*) Oh, milady! (*In tears.*)

LINDA (*gently*)

Yes, I know you've been good and faithful, and I thank you. I have to

ask your pardon, too, for having brought you out of your sunny corn-fields and away from the sound of the sea. Go back to them, Harper. You were happy there, in your homespun. Your face has changed, girl, in the last few years. You've taken on the look that comes to all who count their wages. It's the same in every rank of life; the same with me as with you. I am going out—away from all this turmoil. I am going to try to find my homespun face, the one I used to have before I married. But you won't go back to the homespun, Harper. (*Sighing.*) It's no use to ask you, I know. (*She draws off the gloves and slips off her rings.*) These rings—take them. (*She hands them to HARPER with a smile and turns to go out.*)

HARPER

Oh, milady, indeed I—I— (*Weeping.*) Oh, milady—Your Ladyship's wedding ring's among 'em! (*She holds up a ring. LINDA takes it from her and examines it, wonderingly.*)

LINDA (*with an odd, short little laugh that is half a sob*)

So it is! I—I'd forgotten about it for a long time, HARPER. (*Slowly and with meaning, pointing to the rings in HARPER's hand.*) It has been hidden away—by those. (*With her hand at arm's length, slowly, very slowly, she places the ring upon her finger, and for some seconds afterward she scrutinizes her hand, then suddenly, joyfully, as if awakening from a dream.*) Harper, this is my wedding day! (*She turns and goes out.*)

CURTAIN



## SWEET LAVENDER

By WILLIAM F. McCORMACK

SWEET lavender, sweet lavender,  
Blossom of witchery—  
With purple quaint and wild perfume,  
I met a field of it abloom  
Down by the emerald sea.

Sweet lavender in nosegays wrought,  
Clusters of bonny blue,  
For princesses of golden hair,  
For gipsy girls with features bare  
And chimney sweepers, too.

Its fragrance is an Old World charm,  
Sweetened of memory;  
It breathes of ancient ballad days,  
Of vanished vogues and simple ways  
And old gentility.

"Sweet lavender, sweet lavender!"  
The vending urchin cries—  
"A cluster's but a penny, sir,  
But he who buys sweet lavender  
Buys olden memories."



# THE RICE PUDDING

By JOHNSON MORTON

LEFT to her own devices for the first time since she had set foot inside the sanatorium, Mrs. Waring drew a sigh of relief and looked about her. Slumber Room Number Eighteen, in which she found herself, was a small, square apartment facing the north. The brown floor, the green walls and the blue ceiling were evidently intended to symbolize, if not to imitate, the salient colors of nature. Two straight chairs, a table and a washstand carried out the same idea in rustic wood. Even the mirror, a concession, though a small one, to the demands of civilization, hung in a frame of birch bark to match the frames of four pictures—one in the exact middle of each wall—which portrayed calm scenes of ocean and forest undefiled by a single human presence. And it was the manifest intention of a narrow couch, approached over a green rug, to suggest in its covering the soft moss of some shaded river bank. This appeal, however, was merely to the eye, and Mrs. Waring, as she rolled from side to side on the hard surface, thought regretfully of her own comfortable bed.

"As soon as I leave you," the stern-faced, short-haired attendant had said, "you are to go to the open window and draw in—being careful to use the nose and not the mouth—a dozen long, deep breaths, so that the lungs are well filled with oxygen. Then I want you to lie on your back and relax completely—allowing the arms to remain always in a flaccid condition at your sides—and to take care, meanwhile, that the brain is as empty of thought as is the body of muscular activity. Think of nothing, or, to speak more strictly, do not think

at all! It is now six o'clock. I shall return in half an hour with a cup of hot soup, which you are not to regard as food, but merely as a means of preparing the stomach for the exercise that will be demanded of it later on at the more substantial repast, served promptly at seven in the dining room. There you will join your fellow sojourners—notice, please, that we never make use of the word 'patient' in this establishment—at the evening meal. After this meal is over—it lasts exactly an hour—you will sit for twenty minutes in the reception room, where Dr. Gulliver will join you and read as many pages of some English classic as the time will permit. I must say that you are fortunate, for the Doctor has only just begun 'Clarissa Harlowe.' Then, for twenty minutes, you are all to walk briskly, two by two, on the east veranda—thirty-six times up and down make a mile—and, on returning, twenty minutes more, passed quietly in conversation, bring us to nine o'clock, when the retiring bell rings. At nine-thirty the lights are turned out and the night of refreshment begins, to terminate only at the call of the rising bell at seven o'clock in the morning.

"And now, Mrs. Waring, if there is anything you want at any time—anything, of course, that is not against our rules—you have only to write the request on the pad that hangs by your bed and I will try and do all I can for you. My name is Tingle—Miss Lobelia P. Tingle. There, I must not talk any more. I have given you enough details for the present. The routine of your day will be explained by Dr. Gulliver himself in the morning."

## THE SMART SET

To do her justice, Mrs. Waring had tried hard to follow out Miss Tingle's instructions. She had leaned from the window, while she drew in the requisite number of breaths. She had even relaxed as well as she could on the unsympathetic surface of the couch. But to force her mind to think of nothing proved difficult. Indeed the process seemed impossible, a contradiction in itself; and after some futile moments she had given it up and had turned to a contemplation of her surroundings. This was scarcely more satisfactory, for, while her eye had noted them, her mind had gone on its own way, and presently she found herself wondering why on earth she had ever come to this strange and rather unpleasant place, and reviewing somewhat ruefully the successive steps and reasons that had brought her hither.

First of all was the circular describing "Hewhurst Holme, the Eldorado of the Weary." It had fallen into her hands when she was tired and nervous and rather lonely because her husband had just gone West for six weeks on a business trip. Its alluring picture of the simple life that in its own phrases would "restore the optimism of youth to jaded middle age" and "transform the harried man of affairs into the young Siegfried he was meant to be" had been backed up by many personal recommendations. A friend of a cousin of Lucy Ballard's knew of a man whose cure was "really the most extraordinary thing you ever heard of! Seven doctors had given him up, but in four weeks' time he had left Hewhurst Holme quite cured, and had married soon afterward one of those terribly rich Ormsbee girls who used to live in the big house on the corner of Pompton Avenue and Forty-first Street." And even Mrs. Launcelot Buttress—her judgment was critical and, in consequence, respected—had a good word to say for the place, based on a more intimate acquaintance. A sister-in-law of hers had taken the cure there only the year before. "It was wonderful how quickly she improved! Why, the woman couldn't hear the closing of a door without bursting into tears, and

in less than a week at Dr. Gulliver's she was chopping down trees from morning till night and sharpening her own axe on a grindstone with perfect equanimity! And you know what a horrid noise that makes, my dear!"

That these recommendations should have carried weight with Mrs. Waring is but natural. She was certainly tired out and nervous, and the prospect of rapid recuperation at the cost of little or no personal effort is always alluring. That she could effect this cure during her husband's absence was another pleasing thought. But back of these considerations, she felt the need of escape from a domestic situation as novel as it was disagreeable, which she knew was the real cause of all her misery. Only six months before she had lost her cook! This bald statement, however, of an occurrence chronic in many households fails utterly to give an adequate idea of the present case. The cook in question was an inheritance from Mrs. Waring's mother, and had been in Mrs. Waring's service ever since that lady had set up an establishment of her own. She had combined, in what was, perhaps, an aggressive personality, all the merits that her calling demands. Indeed, it had never entered Mrs. Waring's head that she and Mary Brown could part company; and so, when, after a spirited difference of opinion over some trivial detail, the latter had given "notice," Mrs. Waring promptly forgot all about the matter, and was reminded of it only by the appearance of Mrs. Brown, robed for a journey, who requested with tearful dignity the wages due her. Commands, reproaches and entreaties availed not to alter her decision, and Mrs. Waring was forced to let her depart. Of the successors in her wake it is not necessary to speak. They seemed but to italicize Mary's lost perfections. At last, in sheer self-defense, Mrs. Waring humbled herself to the point of a pathetic letter beseeching her return. But to this appeal no answer was received, and a visit to the only address that Mrs. Brown had vouchsafed disclosed the fact that she had gone away from the

place the week before and had left no trace behind her.

So one may well understand how to such a worried mind as Mrs. Waring's the idea of Hewhurst Holme was attractive. Even now, as she lay on the difficult surface of her couch, she was beginning to feel, despite the strangeness of her surroundings, a contradictory sense of a haven gained. One by one her thoughts lost their sharpness of outline and melted together into a picturesque vision in which Dr. Gulliver with "Clarissa Harlowe" in his lap, forest trees prostrate under the blows of many axes and bands of "sojourners" marching in unison over the measured reaches of the east veranda mingled in soothing sequence.

She roused herself at the touch of a hand. Miss Tingle stood beside her smiling austerely. "You must make haste," she said, "because I've allowed you an extra ten minutes of repose. Now drink your soup, please, and then make preparations for the evening meal."

Mrs. Waring took the cup from her, and as she drained it was conscious of two things. The soup, in itself, was extremely good, and its flavor seemed to touch pleasantly not only her palate but some remote chord of memory.

## II

To confront the long table, where all the chairs, save one at the very end of the room, were already occupied, had proved somewhat of an ordeal for Mrs. Waring. Out of the corner of an eye she had observed with a feeling of disappointment that the faces of the occupants were not only unfamiliar but unattractive; and a few moments later, when she found leisure to examine her neighbors, she realized that fate had placed her between the two most unpromising of all. The melancholy lady on her left, beyond a gloomy bow, had taken no notice of her presence whatever, and a suspicious redness about the eyes and the

portentous sighs that she uttered from time to time proved her to be of the appalling type that loves to "suffer in silence." The stout, bearded and spectacled person on her right, whose napkin tucked into his collar seemed to betray a Teutonic training, turned out to be even more impossible. To Mrs. Waring's attempted civilities he answered with grunts, and when in desperation she essayed a small pleasantry, asking with a whimsical glance about the room if all the *family* were present, he reflected grim disapproval through his gleaming glasses as he remarked sternly:

"Madam, this not a *family* iss at all! Do you not know vot it iss—a collection of *patients*?"

So, rebuffed on both sides, Mrs. Waring gave her undivided attention to the meal—a sort of high tea—and soon realized that, although the food was simple, it was good. Her appetite, of which she had for many weeks deplored the loss, seemed to have returned, and she ate her way through the repast with so much satisfaction that she was a trifle annoyed to hear the sound of moving chairs at the other end of the room just as she was about to help herself to some cheese that stood before her on the table. She put down her napkin, however, but as she rose the appearance of the cheese—it was of the homemade Dutch variety—struck her attention afresh. Its shape was cylindrical, and its top bore the imprint of a star. "Where have I seen a cheese like that?" was the question that floated for a moment across her mind. An instant later she lost track of it as she joined the other "sojourners" on their way to the sitting room.

The reading of "Clarissa Harlowe" by Dr. Gulliver, whose tones were pleasantly monotonous, was far from disagreeable, because it gave her a delicious sense of sleepiness which even the subsequent walk on the east veranda, where her companion proved to be her melancholy neighbor at table, scarcely more communicative than before, failed to dispel. Her hard bed seemed fairly luxurious as she threw

herself upon it, and she was fast asleep before the bell had sounded its warning for the putting out of lights. Nor did she waken save at the touch of the inexorable Miss Tingle in the early morning.

Delighted to find that Dr. Gulliver's examination placed her in a class that made use of the saw rather than the axe, which latter implement, to tell the truth, she had rather dreaded, Mrs. Waring, clad in short skirt and sweater—a costume that was a sort of uniform for the sojourners, irrespective of age and figure—spent her morning hours in the forest. The scene was an animated one. A near-sighted Baptist minister made vast heaps of splinters as he struck feebly at a towering oak, while a plump lady in a red wig hacked viciously at a tough little spruce near by. It was whispered that in the great world she was no other than Miss Violet Verona, the poetess, whose heart bled every month on the pages of nearly every magazine, and who, small wonder, had found herself run down in consequence. Mrs. Waring and the Teutonic gentleman, an overworked scientist from Leipsic, winded in the chase for an important but slippery *bacillus*, were detailed to a thick growth of saplings, where a Mrs. Bates, a wiry little woman, better known to fame as Alceste the Milliner, was already proving that she could ply the saw as well as the needle. From time to time other recruits joined forces with the group, and with the varied company Mrs. Waring grew much amused. Her good humor had at last proved infectious and broken down the reserve of the night before, and she found herself enthused to such a point of interest that she heard with surprise the bell for dinner and left her labors reluctantly. Nevertheless, in spite of a stiff back and aching fingers, she had eleven small trees to her credit!

The meal that followed had a social quality lacking in the other two. The scientist, glad of a good listener, delivered some home truths about *bacilli*; "Alceste" prophesied an alarming change in the shape of winter hats, and

even the mournful lady was moved to pale animation as she unfolded a dreary chapter or two in the story of her life. Mrs. Waring, herself, was most communicative, and gave in turn to the table at large many of her own personal experiences, which were received with a laughter that caused the eyes of Dr. Gulliver, who graced the feast, to beam in her direction with professional approval as upon one who furnished for digestion the best of sauces. And, pleasantest fact of all, for her unwonted exercise had left her hungry, the food certainly seemed to keep up to the high standard of excellence that she had already noted.

Soup, meat and vegetables—all well cooked—were followed by a pudding. Now this pudding was of a far unusual sort, being that simple, economical combination of baked rice, raisins and patience, served cold and eaten with cream. But, as she helped herself lavishly—it had always been a favorite of hers—and tasted the first spoonful, Mrs. Waring stopped short. The flavor was as individual as it was delicious. She asked herself, "Where have I eaten pudding like this before?" And the question brought back the memory of the strangely familiar soup and cheese, and kept recurring long after she had gone to her slumber room, to stick in her mind as she drew her long breaths and endeavored to devitalize on her slippery bed. "Where have I eaten pudding like that before?" she repeated, turning uneasily from side to side, and, "Where have I eaten pudding like that before?" mingled drowsily with a strong inclination to sleep. It was just before she yielded to the latter feeling that her eye caught sight of the pad attached to the bed post, which Miss Tingle had pointed out as the proper means of communication with the outer world. An idea came to her. She sat up in bed, reached for the pad and seized the pencil that hung beside it, and after a moment's thought wrote rapidly a few words on the page. An hour later she was roused by the cool hand of Miss Tingle at her forehead. "It is time to rise and make

preparations for the evening meal," she remarked. Then her voice lost its professional tone as she added: "Say, I think it was real nice of you to write them compliments to our cook. I'll tell Mary when I see her."

### III

"**MARY!** Why, when I heard that name, Manton Waring, it seemed as if I could have jumped out of bed and screamed with joy. For of course I knew that there could be only *one* Mary, and that I'd found dear old Mrs. Brown at last! Do you know, suddenly I felt perfectly well and as strong as a horse, because I realized what had been the matter with me all along! Wasn't it odd? Why, everything seemed perfectly clear, and yet you must acknowledge that it *was* pretty clever of me to notice the soup and the cheese with the star on top and the rice pudding—for it struck me that the poor dear *knew* I was there and had sent these things up as a sort of signal, just as Blondel did outside of somebody's prison, though, of course, he used to sing—*especially* as you know perfectly well how little attention I give to what I eat! Nobody on earth but Mary Brown ever made things just like those, and naturally, for I'm a perfectly simple person, my impulse was to tell Miss Tingle at once that she was my cook and *insist* on seeing her. Most women would have done so, but I didn't; for there was something about that person—Miss Tingle, I mean—I can't tell what—that made me hesitate. As I told you, or at least I meant to, I'd been a little suspicious of her all along. To begin with, her grammar was good when she took pains and bad when she didn't—that's a sure sign of a queer person—and she had the unmistakable look of a woman who'd open your letters over the steam of a tea kettle, if she wanted to see what was inside them. So I merely said, 'Thank you,' in an unconcerned sort of way and got up and started to dress."

Mrs. Waring, at this moment, was

sitting on an unstrapped trunk in her husband's bedroom, whither she had followed the returned traveler only half an hour before, and, while Waring essayed to remove some of the stains of his journey, had plunged into the recital of the events of his absence. These proved of so unusual an interest that at last he gave up all pretense of other occupations and stood leaning against the mantelpiece in a fine attitude of attention. Now, as she paused, he surveyed his wife with puzzled eyes, shaking his head and venturing a word.

"Gussie, I swear, you seem fated to picturesque adventure!" he remarked.

Mrs. Waring smiled up at him gaily. "Adventure? Oh, I scarcely call it *that*, and there was nothing picturesque about it with all those frightful people! I suppose it was rather strange, but you mustn't find fault with me till I've quite, quite finished; and when you hear the very end," she added mysteriously, "I don't believe you'll want to! Don't interrupt me again, *please*, because it puts me out. Oh, I had just got out of bed, hadn't I? Well, after that I went to supper, which, when all is said and done, is an odd meal; but nothing happened, though the food was delicious and made me surer than ever! Then we had a repetition of the evening before, only this time I fell sound asleep during the reading of 'Clarissa Harlowe,' though I dare say it didn't matter much, because everybody else did, too, and the German man snored.

"Well, the next day came, and the next, and there was nothing to do but cut down trees, which made my back ache and I was perfectly sure that I was stretching my hands. So I got dreadfully bored and at the same time quite impatient, for, do you know there wasn't the least sign of an answer to the note I had sent down to Mary. But I had become more and more convinced that the Tingle woman was at the bottom of it, for by this time several things—no, of *course* I can't remember what they were, Manton,

so please don't interrupt—made me sure that she was a sort of spy and was holding something back. Of course I wrote again, several very nice notes, too, but still there was no response, and, it may have been my imagination, but it certainly seemed as if Miss Tingle was self-conscious and ill at ease. So the very next day, or perhaps it was the day after—one was so like another I can't tell—I spoke to her very civilly, I must say, when she came into my room in the morning, and asked her if she'd be so good as to tell the cook I wanted to see her before I went out to cut my tiresome trees. Manton Waring, you'd have thought I'd insulted her, by the way Miss Tingle answered! She tossed her head and spoke hatefully good English. 'Mrs. Waring,' said she, 'I think it's high time we ended this farce. This sort of thing has happened before, but it sha'n't happen again, if I know it. Dr. Gulliver is a very particular gentleman about his food, and always has good cooks; but the lady patients—sojourners, I should say—are constantly hiring them away from him. We've had no end of trouble, so I knew perfectly well what you were after, and I haven't shown a single one of your notes to Mary, not I! I took them straight to Dr. Gulliver instead, and he laughed and threw them into the fire.'

"Manton Waring, I was never spoken to like that before in all my life! I assure you I was astonished, and, although I might have said all sorts of things to her in return—things that were perfectly true—I didn't open my mouth. I simply looked at her in silence, and I know she was mortified, for presently she mumbled some uneasy excuses and left the room, though there were several things that she ought to have done for me.

"After she had gone I made up my mind then and there that it was quite impossible, after what had occurred, to spend another night in the place; and so I started at once—after locking the door and hanging a towel over the keyhole, for you can't ever tell what will happen with a person like Miss

Tingle—to pack my trunk, which wasn't hard, because I hadn't been allowed to bring any decent gowns with me. After I'd finished I went out very quietly into the hall, and, as good luck would have it, there was nobody at the telephone, and I must say the operator was quick—which I thought was a good omen—for I got this house very easily and told them to expect me back that night. Then, do you know, I had a sort of panic, because, of course, I felt that it was only decent to see Dr. Gulliver and tell him my reasons for leaving, and that was certainly awkward after the way he had acted about the notes! But just as I was on the point of turning to his office—don't you think it was rather brave of me, Manton?—something happened! Through an open door that seemed to lead into a passageway came a distinct smell! It was a rather good smell, too, of things cooking. Naturally, it made me think of the kitchen at once; and then I had an idea! Why shouldn't I go to the kitchen and find Mary myself, and get her to leave that horrid place with me, which would serve everybody quite right, I'm sure you'll agree!

"So I flew down the passageway, and, just as I reached another open door and could see into a room beyond where a figure was bending over a range, who do you think should come out but Miss Tingle! She glared at me in quite a furious way, Manton, and for a moment I thought she was going to seize me by the arm. But I gave her no chance, for I brushed by her and said in what I meant to be a very cool voice: 'Kindly allow me to speak to the cook, Miss Tingle. I dare say I ought to have told you before that I have every reason to suspect she is an old family servant of my own whom I have lost sight of.'

"At this she laughed very disagreeably and tossed her head in a hateful way.

"Of course, I can't *prevent* you now that you are here, Mrs. Waring,' she said, 'for I hope I am a lady. But I shall insist on your saying what you



have to say in my presence. At least I can protect my employer's interests.'

"Then she raised her voice and called, evidently to the figure at the range:

"Mary, Mary Brown! There's a person here who wants to speak to you!"

"I ran forward; but as the figure turned and came to meet me I stopped short. For I saw, to my perfect horror, that it wasn't my Mary at all. Much worse, Manton Waring! It was a great, black, grinning *negro woman!*

"Of course it was quite ridiculous, and after that there was nothing to do but laugh. The negro woman—don't you think that it was very odd there should be *two* Mary Browns and both of them cooks?—laughed loudest of all, and Miss Tingle begged my pardon in bad English, which showed that she was honest about it, I think, and Dr. Gulliver, hearing the noise as he passed the hall, came in to see what it was all about.

"There was every sort of explanation, and the black cook was very nice and sent up an excellent rice pudding especially for me that noon, and it tasted exactly like Mary's, which shows that, as Shakespeare said, a great deal depends on your name; and, from her actions, I'm perfectly sure I *could* have hired her away if I'd wanted to do anything so underhanded. But of course I had to give up going away that night—it wouldn't have been decent—but I got Dr. Gulliver to let me leave a week earlier than my time, for really there was nothing the matter with me except that the place was getting on my nerves. He wouldn't take anything off the bill, though, I'm sorry to say, but charged for the whole six weeks, which wasn't fair of him, to say the least, especially as he kept telling me that I'd been a real help to him by keeping the patients cheerful. But then you know what doctors are!

"Dear, it was so good of you to come back five whole days sooner than you

said you would!" Mrs. Waring had left her seat and stood clinging to her husband's arm, her face against his shoulder. "From now on I'm never going to be nervous any more. There isn't a single thing that I want, and I'm going to be perfectly well and happy. You shall see!"

Waring bent down to kiss his wife's uplifted face as he held her close. But he could not forbear a hint of teasing reminiscence. "Even without Mary Brown?" he whispered. "It seems to me that her absence is something more than a crumpled roseleaf."

To his surprise Mrs. Waring began to laugh softly.

"Oh, I suppose I shall *have* to tell you," she cried. "I can't keep it to myself any longer. The strangest part of the whole thing! Listen, dear. When I got back from Hewhurst Holme—silly name, isn't it?—ready for anything, for nothing could be worse than staying there, what do you suppose I found had happened? I don't exactly know how it came about, but I dare say her conscience troubled her for the way she had behaved, and I don't believe she found anybody who was half as nice as we are. At any rate—Barker told me the news as he opened the front door—Mary Brown, *our* Mary Brown, Manton, had come back of her own accord and was cooking in the kitchen!

"A piece of luck? Manton Waring, I'm surprised at you! I don't call it luck at all, and I'm perfectly sure, in a way, that my being at Dr. Gulliver's and having that queer experience had brought it about—in some psychic way, I mean. I know you don't believe in such things, but I do. We little know what occult forces are hovering over us. I mean to study up about it some day, for I call it fascinating. At all events, you needn't shake your head, for I can *prove* to you that Mary's really here. In just three-quarters of an hour, sir"—Mrs. Waring pointed to the clock triumphantly—"you'll be eating one of her rice puddings."

# AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR

By CAMPBELL MACCULLOCH

IN the shadow of the house moved a flitting shape, thrown into an occasional relief by the glow from the open hallway and the street lamp a little way off. Back and forth, first in the direction of the placid river, where craft voiced their muffled complainings, and where the twinkling lights of the Jersey shore were mirrored, lengthened and distorted, in the broad surface, then nervously back in the direction of the park, where the trees soothingly whispered in the soft night breeze, slowly paced the man, his hands first thrust deeply in his pockets and then withdrawn and twisted painfully together. Twice, as he passed in the shadow of a new building, where scaffolding stretched skeleton arms to the sky, his hand moved to his pocket and was as quickly withdrawn. Each time he passed he glanced at the lighted windows of the house before which he had hesitated, and each time withdrew his gaze with a sharp intaking of the breath.

An hour went by. Then he stepped beneath the flickering gas jet that lighted the vestibule, and his face showed pale and haggard and drawn. He unlatched the door, stepped quickly within and seemed to hesitate. Finally he threw back his head with a sharp exclamation and mounted the stairs. From above came a sound of feminine laughter, and as his footsteps fell there was a silence while he stepped along the hall to where a door gave entrance to a small boudoir. Opening this, he stood and glanced at the scene within.

Seated across from each other at a table were a man and a woman. Between them stood a decanter, siphon

and glasses. The woman stared with tense inquiry, as if she had stopped suddenly in the very act of speech. She was fair and good to look upon, with a creamy complexion and a transparent skin. Her hair was piled in a shining mass high upon her head, and her eyes still held the glitter of an arrested interest. The color of her cheeks was high, and between the parted lips shone two even rows of white teeth. As she stared she half rose, then dropped back again with a catch in her breath and glanced hastily at her companion, who sat with his back to the door. One of his hands toyed with a glass upon the table, while the other arm hung over the back of the chair, the fingers clipping a cigarette. He, too, was fair, strongly built in the shoulders and neck, smooth shaven and of self-possessed appearance, while his blue eyes danced on occasion with a joviality that was infectious, though the mouth was weak and the chin bore a trace of indecision. The man in the doorway stood silent, looking grimly from one to the other. As the woman sat back she said with forced gaiety:

"You're late tonight, Harry."

"Hello, old chap!" said the man in the chair easily. "Didn't hear you come in. Have a drink?"

Thus addressed, the other moved quickly to the table, pulled up a seat, sat down and threw his soft felt hat into a corner. Then he drew a cigar from his pocket, lighted it and laughed mirthlessly.

"You didn't hear me come in, eh?" he said. "You can thank your God that you're alive at this minute to hear anything." And as both his hearers

leaped galvanically, he blew a cloud of smoke from his mouth and laughed again.

"Don't trouble to be surprised," he said, and there was a steel-like quality in his voice. "The time for that is past." He paused. "I've been out there in the street deciding whether I'd shoot you both or not. Sit down!" he commanded sharply and tensely, as they both started up aghast. "You listen to what I have to say. I walked that street fighting down the primal instinct to kill; to destroy the man who has stolen my life's happiness; to destroy the woman who played false with my love and my honor. Sounds stagey, doesn't it? But it's the truth. Don't speak!" he admonished as the man leaned forward. "Nothing you could say would change the facts. An hour ago I was on my way here to do for you—with this," and he drew a revolver from his coat and laid it upon the table, at which the woman screamed, choked and sank back, the color of death, "but I've fought it down, and I'll take the other way."

His hand drummed nervously on the table, and the two others stared, wide-eyed, fascinated.

"I'll tell you a story," he went on. "Once there was a poor devil—myself"—and he bowed ironically—"and in a silly moment he married a woman—you"—and he indicated her with a wave of his hand. "He believed she was as good as she was beautiful, and he was happy in his ignorance, poor fool . . . Keep your eyes off that gun!" he snapped sternly to the man, who, white and trembling, had turned to it. "I've told you I'm not going to kill you, damn you! That's too good for you," and he flicked the ashes from the cigar. "As I was saying, the fool—myself—was a fool. He took into his home a snake—in the guise of a man. The snake was considered a 'gentleman.' You!"—and he nodded at the object in the chair. "A gentleman! Gad! What a mockery that word has come to be! A gentleman!" Here Cavendish laid his hand upon the revolver and stared out through the open

window. They could see the muscles in his hand and face stiffen, and they shuddered.

"A gentleman," he repeated as if to himself. "A gentleman, as the old interpretation had it: a man, gentle in thought, in word, in action. Gentle, because he had been brought to value truth, honor and his personal chastity; gentle, because he had been taught to be considerate of others, to be true, courageous, to die, if necessary, in the defense of his principles, calm-eyed and unafraid. Today every upstart but once removed from the gutter, every vagabond of an adventurer with a heart as black as night and a soul as foul as a sewer is a 'gentleman.' God save the mark!" and he smiled bitterly.

The woman looked at him, cold and half dead with fear, an ashen pallor in her cheeks, the sparkle dead in her eyes where now lurked a dim terror. The man, almost collapsed in his seat, was as white as she.

Cavendish looked from one to the other, then smiled with lips alone and went on.

"As guilty as hell, both of you—cowards!" he sneered. "As I said, I decided not to kill you. Oh, I admit I battled hard, for what I wanted was revenge. Revenge! Do you hear?" he almost shouted, and they leaped at the shock of it. "You," he turned to Brownley, "you'd kill me now if you had the chance and could do it behind my back. You're that much of a hound," he finished contemptuously. "I thought you a man once—a real man. I brought you here to my home. I introduced you to—my wife, and you proved your friendship by stealing her. You think you're not a cur?" he said suddenly. "Bah! You haven't the courage of a yellow dog. Come! I'll give you a chance to prove yourself a man; to free yourself—and her."

He shoved the revolver slowly across the polished surface of the table to Brownley—forced it almost into his hand, and then sat back and looked at him, coldly malevolent, but the other shuddered and drew back convulsively.

"Didn't I say so?" He laughed again. "You've been careful, you two. You thought you'd pulled the wool over my eyes, and you chuckled together over it, and for a time you did deceive me, but there came a day, a month ago, when I began to suspect, and then—I knew. At first I could have strangled the two of you in the madness of it all, but I began to see that that would be no revenge. I thought of dragging you through the courts—the slime of them, but that would have been too short; too soon forgotten, and suddenly, like an inspiration, it came to me."

He stopped again, lighting his cigar. The man and the woman shivered, their eyes filled with a horror—and perhaps a flicker of hope. At least, they were not to die. It was she that broke the silence.

"What—what are you going to do?" she asked thickly, leaning slightly forward.

"You're interested, at least," said Cavendish. "And you?" turning to Brownley.

"Get done with it! For God's sake, get done with it!" said the man hoarsely, and there was a fleck of foam upon his lips. The strain was beginning to tell upon him—on both, for that matter, but the woman stood it best. Cavendish leaned his elbows upon the table and glanced from one to the other. There was a white ring about his mouth and dark circles beneath his eyes. He had drawn back the revolver, and now held it beneath his hand, the polished barrel showing brilliantly in the light from overhead. For a full minute the trio sat, and only the stertorous breathing of Brownley punctuated the silence. Then a piece of ice subsided with a clink into a glass, and Cavendish spoke, this time in an even monotone.

"You're both thieves," he said. "You," he indicated the man, "because you stole from me the one thing I valued on earth. You," he looked at the woman, "because you've robbed me of my love, my happiness and my faith in your kind. You stole, and

now you've got to pay." With the last words his voice rose shrilly and he dropped his fist upon the table with a crash that shook the glasses to the floor, while they leaped in unison with the sound. The woman's eyes had now lost some of their tenseness, and Cavendish went on, this time addressing her.

"You will apply for a divorce tomorrow. Here's the card of a lawyer who will arrange it. I'll see that you have the necessary technical evidence. When you are free"—here he turned again to the man—"you'll marry her."

Brownley's cheeks began to regain a little of their color, and he sat up in his chair.

"And if I refuse?" he whispered.

"You won't!" was the sharp reply. "You'll have the knowledge that death waits to help you do what you're told. You'll know that the man you damned to torture is watching you day and night; that at the first sign of faltering he will kill you like a rat; that if you attempt to leave here he'll follow you to hell, if need be, and strangle your miserable life out of you! I mean it," he said, his voice rising, "every word of it. When you're married you'll live here, in this place here where you planned the theft. And I'll see that you're not lonely," he finished grimly.

"You mean—" the woman whispered.

"Yes," he said, turning to her, "I mean that you'll live here in the home I made for you, and that I'll be here to bear you company in your 'happiness.' Whenever you think the edge of what you've done is being dulled you'll have me to bring it back, keen and sharp, again. Do you like the picture?"

"But I don't want to marry; I won't do it," said Brownley, with a flicker of objection. "I had made—other arrangements," and he dropped his eyes and refused to meet those of the woman. "I'll appeal to the police and say you've threatened me. I'll swear you tried to kill me!" he cried, striving to rise.

"Sit down!" thundered Cavendish. "Sit down, you dog!" and the other man fell weakly into his chair again, while his accuser towered over him. "You'll appeal to the police?" he said mockingly. "Do you know what will happen? They'll put me under bonds to keep the peace. What do I care for their bonds? I'll come away from their blasted court, hunt you down, and tear your throat out with my bare hands!" He shook them threateningly before him. "No. You'll stay and pay the bill!"

There was silence again. Mechanically Brownley's dulled brain went back to something he had read years before of the Nihilists; grim men who swore their lives to a cause. Given a man who has eliminated the personal risk from his consideration, and he must in the end reach the one he has set out to remove. Fanaticism is the surest road to death—for the hunted. Where there is no fear of punishment in the hunter there can be no escape for the quarry. Dumbly he felt that what Cavendish had said was true. The police and the courts held no protection for him. This man meant what he said and would do as he threatened, and then, dimly at first, but more and more clearly, there crept back to him across the years a fragment of verse. What was it? Ah, yes:

Make him take her and keep her;  
It's hell for 'em both!

That was it. He was to be made to take her and keep her, and—well, that might not be so bad. If it had not been for the "other arrangements." . . . But all that would have to go now, and perhaps this woman would do. True, she was not just what he would have chosen. . . . He came back suddenly from his wanderings to hear Cavendish saying to her:

"I loved you. God, how I loved you! You were everything to me. Now, you are nothing. Nothing! Do you hear? But you're a woman. You were weak, perhaps, and he tempted you and flattered you, and—now he's going to take care of you. It will be quite like a little family matter,

and you'll get a chance to be happy if you can. If he neglects you, illtreats you, hurts you by word, look or deed, I'll kill him!"

The woman smiled slightly for the first time.

"It's not so terrible, after all, this revenge of yours," she said. "I never liked you overmuch." She hesitated, just as if she knew she lied, then went on: "You were always too cold and hard and far off. You had other thoughts that I never shared. You lived another life. Insensibly you made me feel that I was beneath you. I wanted life, gaiety, excitement, distraction, and I didn't get them. There may have been other women who—"

"Stop!" said the man harshly. "You know you lie. You know in your heart there never was another woman; that I never had a thought that was not wholly yours; that I never made a plan that had not your happiness at the end of it."

He paused and gazed sternly at her pallid face as she cowered in the chair, then turned and paced the room. He came back to the table and stood beside it.

"You were going away together," he went on slowly. "You had made your preparations carefully, and I was to know nothing until you had gone; but you forgot that people talk—"

"Stop!" cried the woman, interrupting in her turn. "You have no right to accuse me of—"

"Don't trouble to specify," he sneered. "I know the exact degree to which you went. I know there was a limit, even to your elastic conscience, but do you suppose that makes any difference?"

The other man seemed to gather a little courage to pull himself together. He said:

"There was never anything actually—"

"Be quiet!" snapped Cavendish. "Do you think you would have been alive now if I hadn't been sure of that?"

Then he turned to her again.

"You've seen what he is," he went

on. "A cur; a coward! He wouldn't marry you now unless I made him. He tells you to your face he had made other plans; that you were a toy to pass away a few hours. He'd deny you, as Peter did his Christ, if he dared, but he doesn't dare. What do you think of him? Weak, a liar, and mean as a whelp. He'd like to kill me and run from you, but he hasn't a man's blood. Suppose you had gone away together. Do you think it would have lasted? Why, he'd desert you as soon as the novelty had worn off. He'd cringe to me now if he thought it would ease him of you. You think you've got a chance of happiness with him? Take it and see what you make of it."

Two months later, and another figure slunk in the shadows of the street and finally entered the house. Brownley went slowly up the stairs as the other had done, and he, too, was pale, drawn and haggard. Time had told upon him: his weak mouth was weaker still; in his eyes there lurked a hunted look as of a man who has a specter constantly at his elbow. As he entered the room the woman rose wearily from a chair by the window, and he questioned her by a glance. She shook her head.

"Not yet. He's never regular now."

Brownley turned away and entered his own room, and she followed him to the door.

"What's to be the end?" she asked.

He threw himself into a chair and glanced up despairingly.

"Don't stand there at the door like a graven image," he growled. "Come in, can't you?"

"Never!" she said vehemently and moved ever so slightly beyond the dividing line of the portal.

"It can't go on like this," she resumed monotonously. "At first, when I thought you cared a little, in spite of what you said and what he showed me, I believed we had a chance, but that was before I knew he was right when he called you a coward. Now, the thought of the thing that is hanging over us—that haunts my waking and

sleeping—is horrible, a constant nightmare. And there's no relief, no hope, nothing."

She buried her face in her hands and sobbed tearlessly, hopelessly. He stared gloomily out of the window and did not answer.

"It's unbearable," she cried with bitterness, "brutal! There must be some way. Think! Think!" she commanded passionately. "We can't go on like this. Ah, if I were only a man!"

"I'd cut and run," said Brownley after a pause, "but he meant what he said. I—" he stopped, and she turned on him quickly.

"You tried?" she queried.

"Yes. Last week. I sent a messenger for a ticket to Montreal, and I had a cab at the servants' entrance of the club. I was talking to two or three chaps in the billiard room, and I left them as if I'd forgotten something, and ran down without my hat."

"Well?" she asked breathlessly.

"When I got to the station he was there. I turned back and gave it up. Twice I've tried for the steamers, but he was always at my heels. Once I got as far as the gangplank of the *Savoie* when I felt a touch on my arm. I thought then he was going to kill me, but he only asked if I hadn't forgotten something. I turned back."

There was silence again until she spoke.

"I'll go mad, mad, if I can't escape this thing," she moaned.

"Oh, shut up!" said Brownley sharply. "Do you think you're the only sufferer? Have I nothing to look back to? Think of me—my life that's wasted—my career that's blasted—the happiness that should have been mine. And what is left? The ashes of hope, the refuse of a dead crater."

"You beast!" she hissed at him passionately. "You were glad enough to make love to me when I wasn't yours; glad enough to take the kisses that belonged to him; glad to have what didn't cost you anything, but you don't like to pay. You're all alike. He's the only man among you, and I hate him," she finished hoarsely.



The man laughed evilly.

"Sometimes I think you love him," he said.

"You're right. I do. He's not a weakling, at least. He gave me the only happiness I've ever known. He took me from a home of poverty and misery and brought me here—to life. And then you came. There was the red danger, but I couldn't see it. You flattered me, pleased me, and then came the wreck. That night when he came in and told us what he would do—even then I should have seen what you were, what was coming; but I liked you, wanted to be with you. I didn't know that what I thought was love could turn to hate so quickly. I told him then that this scheme of revenge rather appealed to me, but he knew better than I did. He knew what a hell was in store for us. I hate him! I love him for what he was, and hate him for what he is. We always hate those we've injured, don't we?" she finished plaintively.

"Always," he replied. Then, as an afterthought: "Why don't you try to get away? You could do it. He wouldn't follow you."

"He has," she answered. "I did what you tried. I went uptown and tried to take a train from there, but I was stopped by a man he had hired to watch me. I tried to get across the river—the same thing. If I go upon the street I'm followed. I feel it."

She leaned her head against the door jamb and was aroused by a sharp exclamation, as of pain, from him. Glancing at him, she saw that his face was drawn and twisted and very white, and that his hands were clenched.

"What is it?" she cried.

He merely groaned slightly, and then the spasm seemed to pass. He opened his eyes slowly and breathed heavily.

"My heart," he said slowly. "It's been bothering me of late, and this"—he waved his hand about the place—"doesn't help it."

She let fall the draperies where she had been holding them back from the doorway and turned again to her own boudoir.

The door opened below and a footstep sounded in the hall. It was Cavendish, she knew. Instinctively she followed the slow steps as they moved up the stairway and into another room. She stood almost breathless, with pulse throbbing, muscles strained and every sense alert, and then went out into the hall. She heard the creak of a chair as it received a heavy body, and realized that the short respite was over. The specter was again presiding over the remains of the feast.

Later in the evening Brownley went out and shortly after Cavendish followed him. Left alone, the woman paced the rooms in thought, clasping and unclasping her hands. She thought of the animals she had seen in the park; the yellow beasts that restlessly moved to and fro in the narrow confines of their cages; the soft, padding footsteps; the ceaseless swing of the head from side to side; the dull glare of the resentful eyes, and she knew that she was as securely caged as they. Like them, the yearning for freedom was all that was left her. Visions of the cool jungle where they had roamed at will came to her oddly, and she bit her lips and realized how helpless she was. The agony was almost more than she could bear. And then her thoughts turned back to the days when as a child she had played with other children. The memories of those days—those dear, dear days, when Cavendish had found her and had sat with her in the little park that overlooked the East River, where the gray walls and turrets of the sorrowful building upon the island in mid-stream bore mute testimony to the evil that is in the world! How long ago it seemed, and how happy she had been!

And now!

Sinking upon a sofa, she burst into a storm of passionate tears, the first she had shed in months. It was as if the inner self had broken through the husk of worldliness that had masked the woman in, and all the pent-up bitterness was being torn away. How long she wept she never knew, but she realized the relief it had given her; and

when she rose at last and went to bathe her eyes she felt almost reconciled and strangely resigned. As the hours crept on she turned over the events of the past weeks in her mind and wondered at her folly. Then she fell to introspection. Was there always an awakening for those who had erred? The women who had slipped down the primrose path—did they come to know what they had done and the value of the gift they had tossed solightly away?

She heard a step upon the stairs and hardened imperceptibly. It was Brownley, and he lurched in unsteadily and went at once to his room. She heard him groan, and went to the door to see. He was sitting in a chair, and when she spoke to him he raised his face from his hands and gazed at her through bloodshot eyes.

"Get away and leave me alone," he said dully, and she shuddered and returned to her seat by the window of the other room which he had never entered. It might have been an hour later that she heard another step, and knew it instantly. In the old days she had listened to its approach with a quickening pulse, and she found it had still the power to stir her. He, too, entered slowly and with a dragging step went to his room; and then came the silence, the terrible silence that seemed to bear her down and crush the very soul out of her. In the end her

eyes became drowsy and she must have slept, for she awoke to find herself still seated in the wicker chair by the open window that grudgingly offered a glimpse of the river lying in the moonlight. Far over on the other shore she saw the row of moving lights that betokened a passing car upon the heights, and now and again the muffled noises of the night came floating in. It was all so peaceful, and somehow the storm of revolt that had possessed her had gone, and she lay back thinking quietly. For the time she had forgotten.

There came a shuffling from another room and a gurgling noise. Again there was silence and she heard a heavy sigh. In a moment there came the crash of a falling body, and in an instant she had rushed to Brownley's door, torn aside the hangings and seen the inert form upon the floor. She gazed at it, her senses benumbed by the shock, and dimly she recalled what he had said about his heart. Then she heard hurrying footsteps, and looked up to meet the eyes of the man she had wronged—in thought, at least—bent upon her. As she gazed they seemed to have lost their steely hardness, and seemed more like the eyes of the man she had loved all her life, for they had a softness in their depths that seemed to breathe of hope for her, even at the eleventh hour.



## F E L L O W S H I P

By MARIE HEMSTREET

**B**ALKED of my heart's desire!  
 Darkened the light of my eyes!  
 The spoil of youth and the pride of life  
 Wrecked in their enterprise!  
 The space of a day for grieving—  
 And then, O Master, then  
 By right divine I claim as mine  
 A place in the souls of men!

# THE FOOLISH LITTLE PATHS THESE PEOPLE MAKE

By HANNA RION

I PROCURED a catalogue and rapidly scanned the list of exhibitors for her name. It was not there. The Water Color Show lost interest. With desultory eyes I aimlessly followed the crowd until I reached the east gallery, where I was halted by a large number of people assembled about a group of sketchy pastel drawings of tatterdemalions—canaille. The sketches were crude, but done with so convincing a coarseness one felt a suspicion of sympathetic strain in artists and subjects.

I consulted the catalogue. "Nella Stell," I read. Mentally congratulating the unknown artist on so terse a name, I found myself lingering unwillingly, a member of that group so manifestly held and startled out of perfunctory interest.

Why I resented the pictures I don't know. Just as I avoid slums and the ugly in street scenes, I preferred not to be stirred by the raw brutality of truth in these sketches. One would not care to live with them, surely.

I felt myself contrasting their grossness with the gentle beauty of her paintings, and on the impulse of the moment I decided to look her up. It was not until the next afternoon my impulse met fruition, for I had to search some old catalogues to ascertain her studio address.

My card having preceded me, I followed the hobbling janitress up the four flights of the old Ninth Street house. She met me with a well concealed surprise, which I rendered unnecessary by mentioning our having

met at one of a certain artist's "Tuesdays" the past winter. While she was prettily dissembling recollection of a forgotten fact, I began to wonder at the singular effect the room made on me.

I had experienced the sensation once before—where? Suddenly there flashed on me the memory of the Mausoleum in Charlottenburg. *This room too was dead!* Yet, here before me was a young woman of very vital beauty and talents; the wind of early spring flapped a loose sketch on the wall—and I felt, without looking about me, the pervading esthetic beauty.

I wrenched myself from a puzzled silence, which, however, seemed more fitting than speech in this studio, to the inanities of explanation. Frankly expressing the disappointment of the night before, I followed with my enthusiastic admiration of her work, and a wonder at not having seen any of it at the past two water color exhibitions.

She rose—I then noticed her extreme transparency and thinness—and silently turned a low drawing board around. Perplexed by her unspoken reply, I looked upon the thing presented. Before me was an unfinished water color—how shall I describe it? A flaccid sky of dirty blue streaked with sallow yellow; uncertain trees scattered with no effort at grouping, hard and without atmosphere; a smudged snow foreground. The ensemble was so inharmonious as to be positively painful.

"Could I send that?" Her voice startled me out of my distressing silence.

"You did not paint *that*?" The question slipped unwittingly past the barriers of tact. She laughed shiveringly.

"Yes. That's the best I can do—now."

The horror in my face must have made eloquent comment. I rose, scanning the walls, and felt the tragedy inexplicable. There hung the very painting which had first enthralled me, that glorious uplift of sky, irradiated with sunlight; the wild-flowered hill, which to only gaze upon made one's whole soul go a-Maying. Such a song in color—a song of youth, joy, love and a world-wide, heaven-high spring!

"No; it's unbelievable!" I cried. "Tell me about it. How did it happen?"

"I don't know exactly," her voice was wearily colorless. "It's very strange, isn't it?"

"But those?" I pointed to the paintings beyond.

"They must have been accidents," she sighed. "I've done nothing but this kind," pointing to the calamity on the easel, "for over a year."

I drew her out imperceptibly. "Where did you first study?"

"I had never studied. Only did occasional sketches, blunderingly—alone, for my own diversion."

"Then?"

"Mr. Roxton happened to call on one of my guests at my home and saw my water colors."

"He recognized your ability?"

A slight color came to her face. "I shall never forget the thrill I experienced when he said, 'Of course you have exhibited?'—this to an amateur to whom exhibitions seemed inaccessible heights!"

"Then he instructed you, I suppose?"

"N-no, not exactly. You see, he never teaches, but he very kindly invited me to work at his studio, where he said he could possibly help me with suggestions and criticisms. It was all very remarkable. Mr. Roxton said I could paint, and I believed him. His faith in my power gave me a presumptuous

certainly. I never stopped to realize I knew nothing of drawing, nothing of technique—I simply painted like one possessed. Those first six months were frenzies of achievement; I lived in a delirium of creative dreams, never questioning, never even wondering how it came about.

"When I began a painting the urge of inspiration—or whatever you wish to call it—was so great I couldn't bear the delay of the sharpening of a piece of charcoal, the cleaning of my palette or box. Mr. Roxton thought it very amusing, but he was so patient, humoring all my ridiculousness."

She paused, smiling as one smiles at remembered childish absurdities.

"I suppose you sketched outdoors a good deal?" I inquired.

"No. Mr. Roxton and I took many tramps in the country, just enjoying, absorbing. I must have been unconsciously alert all my life to nature, for when I began to paint seriously things came back to me so vividly—just as they do to a writer, I suppose. It seemed as though I were bodily back in a scene, but I forgot the ugly, only remembering the beautiful."

"This painting here"—I pointed out my favorite—"where was it done?"

"Right here. It was the first thing I did after taking a studio of my own. It was the aftermath of a day we spent in New Jersey—a day I danced on the hills." She smiled wanly, then looking at it critically, she puzzled her brows as she commented with bewilderment:

"The light and shade are unerring—yet they were not studied out. How did I do it? I just *felt* it—felt it without thinking.

"I must have been obsessed"—she reverted to her early raptures; "nothing seemed real to me but my work. I remember one day I had put something on the little gas stove for lunch, and then looking out of the window an effect of sky arrested me. I painted in oblivion of all else until startled by Mr. Roxton's entrance. He looked at me, through a wall of smoke, asking quizzically: 'We don't happen to know of

anything burning, do we?' The lunch was charred! I literally slept with my paintings. Often I struck a match during the night to surprise the picture I was then working on—to see it new, you know. It was during those quick flashes I often grasped the right thing to do—felt just what it lacked.

"Then Mr. Roxton went abroad. I worked but little during his absence—perhaps I was a bit spent. On his return he had evidently decided to instruct me seriously. He began to discuss composition with me—explained tone, harmony, grays, value—what is value?" she asked as a child might. "I've never been able to understand it."

Her racking cough filled in the interval which I felt a reluctance to invest with enlightenment.

"I became terrified, overpowered, submerged by my ignorance. I no longer dared fling off a theme recklessly, unthinkingly—so many complicated technicalities throttled me. I approached a thing timorously—with such overstrained preparation; all spontaneity was paralyzed. I could only stammer with my brush.

"As for composition—I grew so nervous I *wept* when Mr. Roxton mentioned the word. Weeks passed; the waste paper basket was gorged with failures. I could see Mr. Roxton was growing discouraged. It even kept him from working.

"Then came a day when we had a serious talk, and I realized he had lost all faith. I, too, saw the hopelessness of it, but I couldn't stop trying. Of course I would not let him waste his time any longer—I have never seen him since. But I tried to fight it out alone—if I could have only painted *one* little thing that was masterly, worthy, something I could have sent him to prove his first estimate of me had some foundation—justification. I've tried all this winter—I can never tell you the agony—"

She did not need to tell me; the thing on the drawing board said it all. I looked away in pain, my eyes wandering over the walls where hung the paint-

ings of her beginning—those ecstasies in color.

I felt stifled and rose to go. I took her hand, her cold, emaciated hand, trying to convey silently my useless sympathy and futile desire to serve. As I reached the door I asked:

"You will let me come again?"

"I am giving up the studio. I am going away—somewhere. I must find a new interest. It's such a void here. As long as I stay I will keep on trying. I can't settle my mind on anything else. I couldn't stand much more failure, you know."

"I shall not despair of you. You are so young. It will all return—the success, I mean," I lied, cursing the foolishness of words.

She looked very straight into my eyes with her overlarge gray-green ones, in which a restless light alternately flickered and died.

"No, don't even wish that, my friend. Hope rather that I may be quit of the *desire to do*; there lies my only chance for peace now."

I shook off the deadness of the studio in long, rapid strides across town. As I neared Gramercy Park I met an acquaintance who was also on his way to the Players. Dapper, blithe, he was, as usual, full of the greatness of his tailor.

After assuring him I had seen all his latest illustrations, and said all the things he expected to hear about them, I turned the subject to last night's opening reception at the Water Color Show.

"Yes, were you there?" he effervesced. "Of course you saw those Nella Stell things—aren't they perfectly ripping?"

"Who is she?" I inquired by way of reply.

"She is the success of the hour—*was* a reporter on the *Star* until Roxton discovered her. Met her abroad last summer. Takes him to spot genius and develop it. She shares his studio, you know."

"Humph."

"What did you say?"

"I think it's going to rain," I said.

# LE RÉCIT DU CHIRURGIEN

Par EMILE BERGERAT

**J'**ÉTAIS allé faire à Angers une opération chirurgicale extrêmement intéressante, l'un de ces cas qui ne se présentent à nos malheureux bistouris que cinq ou six fois par siècle, et vous me permettrez bien d'ajouter que je m'étais assez bien tiré de l'un des problèmes les plus ardues de l'art d'Ambroise Paré. Il s'agissait de... mais vous êtes profane, laissons. Ce n'est d'ailleurs que pour vous dire combien je me sentais en forme. Il en est de cela dans notre partie comme dans la vôtre; les Doyen, les Pozzi, tous les maîtres vous diront que la réussite exalte nos énergies, développe nos dons et assure notre science. Le succès est le père du génie.

A mon arrivée, vers cinq heures du matin, je trouvai ma chère femme debout et fort anxieuse. Elle me tendit tout de suite une lettre, venue à minuit, me dit-elle, et qui, quoique toute simple d'aspect et ordinaire, lui faisait peur. Or, du premier coup d'œil sur l'adresse, j'en avais identifié l'écriture.

— Es-tu folle, fis-je en riant, elle est de Marécat.

— Justement, reprit Suzanne, et je l'ai aussi reconnue.

— Alors, il fallait l'ouvrir. Marécat est l'un de nos meilleurs amis, et le plus fidèle. Il m'avise probablement qu'il ne viendra pas dîner ce soir avec nous, comme chaque mardi, depuis quinze ans, il en a l'habitude.

— Il serait donc malade? déduisit-elle.

— Pour la première fois de sa vie, alors?

Et je descellai la lettre.

Vous allez la lire, cette lettre, car je l'ai gardée. Mais à peine y eus-je jeté les yeux que, reprenant ma trousse, je

dégringolai dare-dare à mon auto et courus chez Marécat.

— Tu avais raison, avais-je jeté dans l'escalier à Suzanne, il est malade.

Et je l'entendis crier d'une voix étouffée:

— Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! il est mort!...

Ce disant, l'illustre chirurgien, de qui je tiens cette histoire, était allé à son secrétaire et il en revint vers moi une lettre à la main.

— Mais d'abord, renoua-t-il, vous rappelez-vous Marécat?

— Le boulevardier?

— Dites le type du boulevardier, du temps où il semblait que tout l'esprit du monde se centralisât sur le ruban d'asphalte compris entre le carrefour Drouot et la Chaussée-d'Antin. Il a entraîné la une élite de Démocrite qui, sous le scepticisme apparent de leur philosophie abondante en traits barbeles, cachaient un sens profond de la vie et des âmes d'enfants. Cet excellent Marécat riait de tout, et, sur les choses et les gens, il en trouvait inépuisablement de "bien bonnes." Eh bien, savez-vous de quoi il est mort? Lisez, pendant que je vais recevoir une cliente.

Et je lus:

"Mon vieux, pas de fleurs, pas de discours, pas de piquet de la Légion. On s'embête trop, je fiche le camp, rien de plus simple. Je n'ai, tu le sais, ni père, ni mère, ni frère, sœur ou bâtard, et je laisse, dans mon tiroir de gauche, les cent louis nécessaires pour solder les frais crématoires de ma vaporisation. Tu offriras le reste, de ma part, à la Société protectrice, dont je suis membre, pour racheter des cochons d'Inde de la vivisection à l'Institut Pasteur et



pour leur rendre la liberté. Les lapins m'intéressent beaucoup moins. Je trouve le lapin bête.

"Adieu, ami Georges, et bonjour autour de toi. Ta cuisinière m'a fait passer de bonnes heures, les meilleures même, sur la terre; mais, je m'obstine, pas assez de safran dans sa bouillabaisse et un peu trop d'ail dans sa brandade tout de même. Nous ne sommes pas à Marseille.

"Dis donc, j'y pense... Sous prétexte que je dîne chez toi, depuis quinze ans, tous les mardis, ne me fais pas la mauvaise blague de V... à ce parasite de S... Tu la connais? Quand ce fut son tour de défiler devant la fosse du pique-assiette, il y laissa tomber son rond de serviette!... N'est-ce pas, qu'elle est drôle?

"Je ne te cache pas que j'ai choisi le moment où tu es, en Anjou, en train de réparer dans un abdomen les distractions génésiques de la mère nature pour me faire passer le goût surfait du pain. Je te connais, tu voudrais me le rendre, et, qui pis est, tu me le rendrais! Merci, il sent la sueur du peuple. Il en est fait du reste.

"La dernière pièce de D...—je l'ai vue hier—n'est pas bonne, mais le roman-feuilleton de G... me passionne. Quel dommage de ne jamais savoir ce que la comtesse allait faire dans la caverne!

"*E finita.* Ma dernière cigarette pour toi... pour vous deux. Ouf!... —Ton MARÉCAT."

Le docteur rentra et reprit:

— J'arrivai à temps, il respirait encore.

"Il s'était appuyé, assis à sa table, le menton sur le revolver, et la balle, déviant sur la mâchoire, était allée se loger dans l'oreille. Il devait endurer le martyre, mais pas une plainte. C'était superbe. On n'imaginerait pas la force de stoïcisme de ces organisations byzantines qui, dans la vie courante, souffrent d'un pli de rose.

"— Ah! c'est toi, murmura-t-il entre deux souffles haletants. Raté!... C'est ridicule... Laisse-moi claquer.

"Outre que mon devoir m'ordonnait précisément le contraire, je ne con-

naissais à mon vieil ami aucune raison plausible, disons, si vous voulez, excusable, de disparaître de ce monde. Célibataire pratiquant et théoricien des liaisons passagères, très à l'aise sinon riche, doué d'une santé de fer, recherché partout pour son esprit inventif et mordant, Marécat n'avait pour être heureux, si le poisson l'est dans l'eau, qu'à faire les cent pas académiques sur le bitume du boulevard, son élément.

"Je me disposai donc à procéder sans retard à l'opération primordiale, urgente, de l'extraction de la balle. Elle était des plus périlleuses, mais elle s'imposait. Il y allait du salut de l'homme que j'aimais entre tous et qui me rendait ma chaude affection. Je vous ai dit que j'étais exceptionnellement en forme. Je voyais net, j'avais le poignet sûr, le sang-froid s'équilibrait en moi à la science anatomique, j'étais assuré de le sauver. C'était l'heure du chirurgien.

"Aidé de son domestique, d'ailleurs en larmes, car il adorait son maître, j'avais étendu le cher suicidé sur son lit, et nous lui lavâmes le visage ensanglanté. Il se laissa faire d'abord, mais quand il me vit ouvrir ma trousse, il se dressa, les mains tendues pour me repousser:

"— Non... non... je ne veux pas... La paix!...

"Il n'y avait point de temps à perdre au débat. A défaut d'internes qu'il ne m'était pas possible de requérir, il me fallait l'assistance de deux autres bras pour immobiliser le moribond, au moins pendant quelques minutes. Le concierge de l'immeuble s'offrit pour ce service..."

Ici, le maître s'interrompit un instant, et, visiblement oppressé par le souvenir tragique, il fit quelques pas autour de son bureau, en silence. Puis il s'arrêta devant un admirable portrait de femme, pastel rayonnant, qui illuminait tout son cabinet:

— Regardez, me dit-il, c'est elle, ma bien-aimée Suzanne, à l'âge qu'elle avait alors, vingt-cinq ans, dans toute sa floraison de beauté raphaëlesque. Mais, sourit-il, en revenant à moi, je vais trop vite.

"J'avais fait un signe à mes deux ai-

des improvisés et m'étais armé de la pince. Le concierge embrassa les jambes et le domestique les bras. S'ils le maintenaient trois minutes dans la position favorable, j'extrayais la balle; le reste n'était plus qu'affaire de soins et question de cicatrice. Par une chance inouïe, la membrane tympanique était indemne. Quelques dents à remplacer, et, en un mois, Marécat réparait sur les boulevards, cigare au bec... Hélas! il n'y devait pas revenir, car il ne le voulait pas.

"Sous la double étreinte, ses forces se ranimèrent. Il se débattait, ruait, boxait, se cognait le front à la muraille.

"— Lâche!... me criait-il.

"A moi, lâche, son meilleur ami!... C'était deux fois terrible, et pour cet ami, et pour le chirurgien. Je me domptais pourtant, car là est la vertu professionnelle, et, l'outil au poing, je guettais l'instant propice où la fatigue me le livrerait. Ce fut lui qui lassa mes aides. Trempés de sueur, ils renoncèrent à la lutte, et je dus courir chercher des internes à ma clinique.

"Lorsque, vingt minutes plus tard,

et trop tard, je revins en force, avec quatre de mes élèves exercés à nos duels contre la mort, il ne me restait plus, du bon et charmant compagnon de ma jeunesse et de toute ma vie, qu'un cadavre défiguré. Profitant de ma courte absence, il s'était trainé jusqu'à sa table, et, y reprenant le revolver, il s'était criblé, mitraillé, frénétiquement, des cinq balles qui y restaient. Voilà comment, sourit tristement le docteur en reprenant la lettre, Marécat n'a jamais su ce que la comtesse du feuilleton allait faire dans la caverne!..."

— Mais la raison du suicide?

— Je ne vous l'ai donc pas dite? Eh bien, voici. A ma rentrée chez moi, ici même, dans ce cabinet, je trouvai Suzanne, ma femme, qui m'y attendait, comme écrasée d'angoisse.

"— Eh bien, me dit-elle sans se lever, il est mort, n'est-ce pas?

"— Oui. Mais comment le sais-tu?

"— Il m'aimait, fit-elle.

"— Toi? Lui? Marécat?

"— Depuis quinze ans.

"— Et il te l'a dit?

"— Jamais."



## LE COLIBRI

Par GEORGES BOUTELLEAU

J'AI vu passer aux pays froids  
L'oiseau des îles merveilleuses;  
Il allait frôlant les yeuses  
Et les sapins mornes des bois.

Je lui dis: "Tes plages sont belles;  
Ne pleures-tu pas leur soleil?"  
Il répondit: "Tout m'est vermeil;  
Je porte mon ciel sur mes ailes!"



LET others the female form divine. I can't.

# THE LONG HUNT

By JEAN ELGINBROD

THE woman stood in the open doorway of the roughly built, unpainted lodge. On three sides of the long, low building loomed the deep, mysterious Canadian forest. Before it lay the placid lake, only a narrow, rocky strip of shore between her and its peaceful lapping.

She was small and white, her childish face quite without color. Only her eyes were alive, eager, a tragic brown, with vivid orange flecks and soft amber lights.

The man in the canoe beating down the shining blue lengths of the lake saw her suddenly through the thick growth of pines and birches that hedged the shore. For an instant his paddle wavered, and the swift blood leaping into his eyes blinded him. Then he swung easily into the little landing place and beached the canoe.

She did not turn. It was almost as though she were afraid to look.

He reached the bottom step and stood hesitating. His coarse blue-flannel shirt lay open at his brown throat, but he pulled it lower yet, as though it choked him. His black hair lay damp on his forehead.

Then slowly she turned her head, and their eyes met. The hope that had sprung fiercely into her own went out like a quenched flame.

"Oh," she said, "it is you!"

"*Eh, bien*, yes. Are you alone?"

"I have been alone a whole year."

A swift smile twisted his swarthy face for an instant; then it vanished.

"You didn't explain, *non*?"

"How could I? I was bound by my promise."

A savage admiration swept his lean face.

"But you told him—it was not true—what he thought?"

"Yes, I told him that."

She leaned a thin hand heavily against the door.

"And your word, it ees not enough?"

She laughed drearily, as one without hope.

"How could it be? I had been gone a day and a night with you, and there was the lying letter you had left for him. You did not tell me about that."

"*Non*." He shrugged his shoulders.

"It was all a good trick. I hold all the cards, I, and yet—I lost."

His dark face worked strangely. His voice cracked suddenly like an old man's.

"*Mon Dieu*, Marie, why could you have not love to me?"

The woman did not speak.

"What under heavens is there in a white leetle thing like you to conquer a man like me? I watch you grow up, a tiny slip of a forest girl. I think, 'Some day, *longtemps*, when she is grown, I will marry her,' but, after you come home from the big school you seem to grow the many miles 'way from me. Then, *voilà*, this man with his fine airs comes up here from Quebec to hunt. In one week, in two weeks, I am nothing. He wins with one throw of the dice. By gar, I have education some. I have money, too, and lands, some, though I love best to live in the big woods. 'Tis nothing. I am forgot."

He cursed softly.

"Then I lie awake nights out in the deep forests where the owls cry and plan and plan. He know me a leetle. Already he ees jealous a leetle. Then—the trick work. You have no fear

of me, and poor sick old woman far up the reever wants you. It ees enough. You go with me, easy, easy. *Voilà*, I have you, in the hollow of my hand—" He clenched his great fist.

"Even when I tell you it ees one trick, that night, after the dark comes, you never flinch, but your eyes—your eyes! How you talk with me; how you talk! A day's journey in a wilderness you do not know, alone; with me you win. I bring you back, as safe as when you go—"

"Except for the condition, the promise."

He laughed harshly.

"Yes, I was ashamed he should know that I, Jacques Beriault, the hunter, had failed to conquer you, had brought you back again safe. Also I was of a mind to try him, that white husband of yours, to see if your word alone was enough; if he have the faith enough and the love enough to believe what you say."

She leaned more heavily against the door.

"Would you have believed, a day and a night gone?"

"Would I? *Mon Dieu*, yes! I'd kill the man for the trick, but you—you, I'd crawl to you for a word of love. Women have come to me all my life, at my call, but you— And I have you in the one hand to crush you, and I let you go. *Mon Dieu*, Marie, why, why?"

His hungry eyes devoured her, the slim lines of her figure in her scant blue skirt, the swell of her young bosom, the white of her delicate face and neck, the scarlet of her lips.

"If he did not believe you he should have killed you," he said after a minute.

"He left me," she answered simply.

"For one hour I hung around that night. I had fear. I saw him go, saw you at the door, but no fight, no noise; so I think he ees to believe and he stay. Then I go, way up to the north to the big hunting, and stay till now. I nevaire think you are alone."

She shrank, hating him with her eyes.

"Renée—you remember her—is here with me much. I cannot go back

home. I cannot leave this place, his. Some day, some day he will come back."

"It ees a year, *longtemps*, and still he does not come," he taunted. "Isn't that long enough? Come, divorce, if you care, ees easy. Desertion, it ees good. He will not to fight. Perhaps, even, he ees dead."

She shivered suddenly. Her lips went blue.

"Ah, Marie, *petite chérie*, the trick was bad, but I was mad with the love for you. How much his love worth? See, he does not trust you; he does not believe you when you speak. Didn't he know, that man, you don't know how to lie?" He strode up the steps to her side.

"I know that, even I. *Voilà*. Come, we will go to the big lakes, up beyond Mouana, Okono, and build a cabin. Where you say, we build. We will fish and hunt and lie out and watch the sunsets and the stars and the sunrises. I will show you where the otters build, and the birds; where the deer stalk and the beeg animals hide. The bear and the moose—I know them all. The woods, they are the home of me; they shall be yours." His voice broke.

"Jesu, Marie, my soul it ees yours for the asking."

He slipped to his knees and hid his shaking face in her scant skirt.

The woman stood very still. Though she hated him she felt his misery. By the greatness of her own she knew his.

In the distance a loon called. The wind came in fresh from the lake.

"Poor boy," she said and touched his head a pitying second with her thin hand.

He raised himself stupidly. A fleck of color touched her cheeks.

"For the evil you did give me back my promise," she whispered.

He looked at her, his face sullen.

"*Non*. You promise me that night, *longtemps*, that you not explain, nevaire, why or how you go with me that night. I hold you to it by the God you swore it by. It ees the only condition I make when I bring you back. I hold you to it."

She did not move.

"If you should ever see him—" she began softly, a faint hope yet in her eyes. "You know where he used to go hunting sometimes."

He laughed.

"If I ever see him I tell him nothing. I just laugh. Perhaps I shall kill him. *Eh, bien*, I will see."

He turned abruptly and went down to his canoe. With lithe grace he pushed it off and swept out into the lake. His sturdy figure stood out sharply against the delicate pink and blue plaid of the sky as the canoe rose and fell, flying down the lake into the sunset.

The woman watched him out of sight. It grew dark and the air was chill, for the summer was yet young. At last she went in, dully, as one worn with long waiting, and locked the doors behind her.

The man paddled on with fierce vigor, putting mile after mile of shining water between them. He seemed never to tire. Sometimes he sang to the time of his stroke, yet without joy:

"When doors are open, the bird is free.  
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabriel hear."

Even after night lay heavy over his way he still pushed on.

At last he shot into a little curve of the land and pulled the canoe high up on the bank.

He awoke early the next morning and catching two trout, cleaned and cooked and ate them, still with that uncanny rapidity. Afterwards he pushed off into the lake again, and traveled on like a man with a race to run.

In four weeks he had gone nearly eight hundred miles, following the lakes in his slender canoe as far as they went, and then pushing on through strange, deep wildernesses where only he knew the path.

His beard grew until he was black like a Hussar. At a small tavern he caught a view of himself in a shabby mirror and laughed, but without mirth.

"Even, she, the leetle one would not know me now, *voilà*."

Afterwards he cut himself, deliberately, with his keen-edged pocket knife, a

long slanting gash in the fleshy part of one cheek, which, as it healed, twisted his face into a strange unfamiliar guise.

Once, he started back over the road he had come, almost running, his face working cruelly, his eyes desperate; but, after a day's mad journeying he stopped again, and lay spent in the dim shade of the deep forest, fighting the passion that was calling him.

After that he turned again and worked farther and farther north to the hunting ground of big game.

At last, up where the nights are cold and the stars like suns for brilliancy, he found his clue.

The yellow-faced little barkeeper at the small inn greeted him cheerily, after a long puzzled look at his unfamiliar countenance.

"Hi, I hardly knew you!" he roared.

Jacques leaned over the bar.

"You don't know me," he said.

After a second the fat little barkeeper smiled.

"Oh," he said loudly, that the loungers might hear, "that is right. You are not the man I think."

"Many hunting up beyond?" queried Jacques carelessly.

The barkeeper nodded.

"Who you looking for?" he asked very low.

"Francis Strickland, gentleman hunter from Quebec, white-faced and lean. Plenty of cash."

"In the other room now. Party of five, looking for a guide."

"I'm the guide, Louis—"

The barkeeper nodded.

"They'll be here in a second. I'll fix it."

It came to pass easily. No one recognized him. They hired him, with another, and the next morning the party started out into the wilderness.

By some chance Jacques was always near Strickland from Quebec, the tall, thin man with the young face and iron gray hair. He was a moody man, quite at variance with the rest of the party, but apparently they knew him well and bore with him good-naturedly. He was a good hunter, and quite without fear.

As the days went by Jacques and he went off on little trips of their own together.

"A good match," laughed one of the party. "Both are taciturn devils."

They had wonderful luck. Their trophies were the talk of the camp.

Into their guarded intimacy, however, had come as yet no personal note. Then Jacques hastened matters, for the days were growing short and his hate burned him like a live thing. It had been a long hunt, and he desired the end. To taunt, and afterwards to kill, ah!

It was quite dark. They had been on a day's tramp, and being yet a good two hours' walk from camp, had built a fire in a little clearing by which to cook their supper and warm themselves, for the night was cold. They had shot nothing all day save a few rabbits, which they cooked now.

"My luck, it ees disappear," complained Jacques as he ate. The other man did not answer. He seemed even not to hear.

The smell of the burning pine tormented Jacques. Through the soft smoke he saw the other's high bred face.

"It ees of a woman you are thinking. Come, *allons*," he taunted lightly, and watched.

Strickland faced him slowly.

"Yes," he said.

"Thinking of one, myself," Jacques laughed insolently. "Thinking of my woman, back there by Marigold Lake. A little white thing she ees, with lips like the winter berries for redness, and soft, round neck, and eyes—eyes that draw the soul of you from your body. Her name—perhaps you hear it sometime—it ees Marie."

He stopped and waited.

The other man's eyes widened slowly, until they glinted as though they had been varnished, but Jacques's hot hate swept him on.

"Why don't you say something, you?" he snarled, rising to his feet like a cat.

Strickland got up slowly, that strange awfulness still in his eyes.

"Who are you?"

Jacques brushed the smoke away that hung between them. Their faces were on a level now.

"I have changed some," he laughed, "but she, the leetle Marie, ah, she is the more beautiful yet, always so slim, so white; and she loves me much, me, Jacques Beriault—that leetle Marie."

His hot blood beat exultingly in his ears as he watched the other man's face. The great muscles on his shoulders tightened with a quiver.

Still Strickland did not move.

"By gar," taunted the hunter, "are you one leetle baby? Tam you, have you the great fear to fight me?"

And as he spoke he felt slyly for the knife hidden so cunningly in his flannel shirt.

Strickland leaned forward a little, his suffering face very white.

"Is she—she—quite happy?" he asked gently.

"Is—she quite happy!" Was she quite happy, that little Marie with her child air and her sorrowful face?

Jacques caught his breath sharply. He saw her standing, wistful and patient, in the open doorway, begging him to find and send back to her this man whom she loved. He felt her longing. And this other man's first thought had not been of his own humiliation, but of her—of her.

Something seemed to break within him, and the hated purpose he had hugged to himself these many days ebbed and went.

Once before his love had been great enough to save her, even from himself. Again, now, it swept over him mightily, with the memory of her standing there waiting, in her scant blue skirt. It seemed, for an instant, to obliterate the lesser things, hate and passion. To give her back her happiness—that was enough. Jesu, just to send back the light to her face! Was he a cur to whine because he had lost?

He threw out his great arms suddenly.

"I lie," he said swiftly. "I not seen her these one long year, *non*, till these six—seven weeks gone. Then I go back in my canoe, and she there in the

doorway, alone. I speak with her, but she will none of me, nevaire, nevaire. She have no love for me, *non*. By gar, it ees you she waits for, you, and you would not to believe her—you white dog. That letter I write to you, that day, *longtemps*, was tam lie. She is nevaire mine, nevaire. I trick you, me Jacques Beriault. *Mon Dieu*, I have the great love for her, but I lose always. It ees you, you. *Eh, bien*, the game is done. Go back and tell her."

His voice caught hoarse in his throat.

"I make her swear by the God that she not tell you why we go that day, *longtemps*; then I bring her back safe. She conquer me, me. I could have the shell, but the spirit of her, it ees not for me. I bring her back. Only I make the condition, that she must tell nothing why she go, or where—to see how much you trust her, and also, because I am some ashamed that I lose. *Voilà*, you one curl! You leave her, but still she love you. Women are strange. Now I come to keel you, but I cannot. Still she holds me. Go now, quick, before I change my mind again. *Mon Dieu*, tell her I give her back her promise, that leetle Marie. Go, go!"

Then Strickland was upon him and they went down.

"Do you lie, you black beast?" he gulped, as they fought.

"Jesu, if I only did! Look out or I keel you, yet!"

Strickland fought ferociously, frenzied with the thought of the year gone and the girl waiting alone, hopelessly, by Marigold Lake.

They swayed and stumbled and separated and came blindly together again.

Jacques's lips drew back tightly over his white teeth, as he struck with an awful joy.

Then, as they fought, something came suddenly upon them, a clumsy brown shape swaying out of the underbrush in the dark, drawn by the odor of the flesh cooked upon the fire.

The men, struggling, were directly in its pathway, but they were blinded by smoke and their own fury so that

they saw nothing until the bear struck out with an irritated roar.

Her paw caught Strickland upon the shoulder, and ripping it open, felled him like a small, stumbling child. Immediately she scented the warm blood, and rearing her great head, roared again triumphantly.

Strickland did not move. He had no weapon with which to strike. The guns were at the other side of the fire. He looked stupidly up into the red, gleaming eyes, and waited, dazed.

Then in an instant Jacques had leaped, and catching Strickland up, had thrown him bodily to one side. But—there was no time to draw back and save himself.

The brute sprang full upon him, snarling, and tore his brown flesh into crimson ribbons, and crushed his great bones like paper.

It was over in a breath. Strickland ran for the guns, but he fired twice before the beast dropped, and then there was nothing living, or even human in the thing that lay beside her. The long hunt was ended, and, at the last, he had saved, where he had come to kill.

They buried him there the next morning and afterwards separated desolately. There was no heart in them for more hunting.

Strickland, his joy stilled by the wonder of the man's sacrifice, took the trail swiftly. It was early in September, but the short Canadian summer was going. Already the trees were brown, and when, at last, he came in the early morning to the edge of Marigold Lake, the frost had touched the forest, and the long lodge looked drear and forsaken among the crimson of the maples and the yellow of the birches.

Then he saw her standing in the open doorway, and he ran.

Her hands clenched as she saw him. Her great eyes widened.

"Francis," she whispered fearfully, and sobbed.

Without a word he picked her up as though she had been a child, and carrying her within, shut the door gently behind him.



# A CONFIDENT TOMORROW

By FREDERICK J. BURNETT

THE woman looked at Hathaway in a quizzical sort of way as she gave him the glass of water, as if there were something he ought to understand but apparently did not.

He wondered if it was contrary to the custom of that part of the country for a thirsty wayfarer to ask at a farmhouse for a drink of water. Perhaps it was his tramping clothes and knapsack. Having traveled much, he knew that the unaccustomed is often considered outlandish and barbaric.

He drank a second glass of water. Then the woman asked him to sit down and rest—still with the quizzical look in her eyes.

They were large, luminous eyes. The years that had cut lines about them had spared the eyes. As he looked at them something seemed to smooth out the lines in her face and brush away the gray hairs, and through a mist of years he saw a slender figure in white, with blue ribbons and fluffy brown hair. She stood by a lilac bush, a cluster of the flowers of which she held in her hand. Her lips were saying "No," in the same voice that had asked him to sit down, but her eyes were saying "Yes."

"Clare!" he cried.

"Your memory isn't as good as mine, Ran. I knew you at once," she said, smiling.

"Have I changed so little?" he asked.

"Have I changed so much?" she laughed.

"I've always thought of you as you were that night by the lilac bush. I hadn't realized that a rosebud develops into a full-blown rose, and—"

"That roses fade and lose their sweetness," she interrupted.

"*This* rose hasn't. Your eyes are as bright as they were then, when you told me I mustn't see you any more."

"But my face is wrinkled, my complexion is gone and I've a great many gray hairs," she said. "That was twenty-seven years ago, Randall. They've been rather long years—and hard ones."

"You haven't been happy, Clare!"

"I didn't expect to be."

"But I thought—"

"I know. They all did, except our family. Do you suppose I'd have let anyone know I was marrying a man I didn't care for? It was all wrong, but sometimes it's so much easier to do what someone else wishes."

"If I'd only understood," he groaned, "I'd have carried you off by force."

"You know, Ran, father was ambitious for me. Henry's success appealed to him."

"Yes, I do know. He said I was an idle dreamer who'd never amount to anything."

"His standards were different from yours—from *ours*, for I agreed with you and always have. He never had much money. He thought my future would be safe with a man who could make money. He didn't believe you could."

"I haven't—very much," Hathaway admitted.

"You've made a name. I've read of you in the papers. You've made more out of life than can be measured by dollars."

"I haven't made as much of it as I might if I'd had you for inspiration."

"Poor old father!" she said, as if she had not heard his last remark. "He

had wanted money for so long and it seemed so hard for him ever to get any that he grew to think enough of it would spell life. And mother, she thought to be beyond the necessity of turning dresses and wearing shabby gloves would be heaven. She vowed one of us, at least, should have things easier than she had. They couldn't imagine anyone would want to have money just for the sake of having it. Sometimes I wished she could know all I've been through. But I was always proud, and I don't think they ever guessed."

"Nate Willis wrote me of their deaths and of the marriage of your sisters. I've heard a little Westonville news."

"You must stay to dinner, Ran. We have it at noon, just as they did at Westonville. I suppose you're accustomed to a different hour."

"To any and all hours, or none at all," he laughed. "But I don't feel like meeting Henry Coe just now."

"You won't. He isn't here."

"This is idyllic!" he exclaimed. "Bees and grass and apple blossoms, and the scent of lilacs from somewhere."

"Yes," she agreed, "this is old times. This is Westonville."

"And you are Clarissa Thornton again," he went on, "and I am twenty-two. The world's young again and life is all before us."

"A good share of *my* life is behind me," she said bitterly, "and it's different from what I thought it would be."

"How the smell of lilacs and apple blossoms brings it all back!" he cried, sitting up and drawing a deep breath.

"Yes," she assented, sniffing the perfume-laden air. "I never dared let it, though, until this spring. I was going to do wonderful things then. Life was as fair as an apple blossom. What I *have* done has been to get three meals a day for twenty-seven times three hundred and sixty-five days. Can you imagine anything more deadly monotonous than that?"

"I suppose the meals were most excellent ones, and not all alike?"

"No one ever mentioned their excellence, unless there was some short-coming to be pointed out," she replied, and then added: "It isn't the drudgery I mind. If my work had amounted to anything, if I'd accomplished anything worth while, I wouldn't cry over lost youth and cheerless yesterdays; but to look back over all these years and feel they've been wasted . . . And I meant to have done so much with them."

"I don't quite understand, Clare. Hasn't Henry done well?"

"If you mean *money*, he's always made enough of *that*. Do you know how people become rich, Ran?"

"No. I wish I did."

"They let the love of acquisition blot out all other loves; forget everything but dollars and cents and cling to every penny as if there would never be another coined. That's the way we've lived."

"I knew Henry was thrifty," said Hathaway. "I didn't think he was as bad as that."

"You knew we went out West on our wedding trip?" she asked. He nodded.

"We came here to this farm. Henry had just bought it. Then he told me this was to be our home. He'd sold the Westonville place to some New Yorker. Thought that would be the easiest way to manage it, for him. Was afraid the family or I might object if we'd known his plans before. We've been here ever since. I haven't been fifty miles from here in twenty-seven years. When Henry had to go anywhere I must stay and look after things. When he was home he needed me, and could never afford to let me travel, anyway."

"When mother died it was in harvest time. Henry said he really didn't see how I could leave, and that, as she was dead, it wouldn't matter to her, anyway. When father died it was about the same way. Henry thought I was needed more here, and it would be a foolish waste of money. So I've never been back, and you're the first old friend I've seen since I was married. You can imagine if I'm glad to see you."

"Sorry I'm not better posted on

Westonville news. I've only been there once or twice since—since it ceased to be Westonville to me."

"I thought you'd find someone else, Ran. There were so many nice girls in the world."

"If one wants one particular girl and can't have her, the others don't count. There was only one Clarissa Thornton."

"Fortunately. But let's forget her for a while. Tell me about yourself."

She bent forward and looked at him in silence for a moment.

"Oh, it's good to see you, Ran. You haven't changed much. There's gray in your hair and mustache, and your face is browner. It's stronger, too. You've led a wholesome life."

"Shall I read your face?" he asked.

"If you can."

"You've grit your teeth and grinned and borne it more than once. But you've seen the sun sink behind the farthest of those billowy swells, and watched the glories of the evening sky. You've seen the day come up from behind that line of bluffs across the river, and it's kept your eyes young."

"Yes, I've seen all that, yet I've hungered for something more. I suppose *you've* seen all the places we were going to visit some time, when our ships came in?"

"I went to Paris to study, you know, and from there to Rome. Then I went up the Nile to paint tombs and temples. Was in Egypt the better part of two years. After that I went to India to do illustrations for a series of magazine articles. I've been pretty nearly everywhere else, but keep going back to those places—Paris, Rome, Egypt, India, the spell of them is irresistible. Now I'm trying to see something of my own country in the best way to see a country—afoot."

"You've seen everything and had all sorts of adventures, while I've been staying home to wash the dishes. I've starved for a taste of travel."

"You poor girl! I wish I could ask you to get your hat and run away with me, to Paris and the other places. Would you go?"

"I might, if I thought you meant it;

if you could make me believe you really want me and aren't merely sorry for me."

"No, you wouldn't. You'd stick to 'duty' to the end of the chapter. I couldn't even convince you there's such a thing as duty to yourself."

"You don't need to. I realize it now. That's why I want to run away. I want a taste of pleasure before I settle down into old-womanhood."

"Oh, if we only could, Clare! We'd go to California. I'd paint some pictures there to raise the wind; then we'd take in the Pacific islands and my beloved India, Egypt, Rome and Paris."

"It sounds lovely. I'd dearly like to go. I meant to go away somewhere pretty soon, anyway."

Visions of what life would be with this woman, whom he had always loved, for a companion; memories of castles in the air they had built together so many years ago; thoughts of the empty life she had been leading surged through his mind. He could make up to her for all the starved years she had lived with her selfish, money-getting husband, he knew, and he sighed for some way in which he might do it without bringing a blot on her name. He would encourage her to break away from the old life, but she must not compromise herself in doing so. Citizen of the world that he was, he had not yet outgrown the ethics of Westonville, where it was deemed unseemly to run away with another man's wife.

"I forgot to tell you, Ran," said the woman unconcernedly, as if it were of no real consequence, "that Henry died six months ago, so if you really want me to get my hat and go with you there's no reason why I can't."

For a moment he stared at her blankly; then he seized both her hands.

"And Ran," she continued, "my share of the estate's quite some, and you won't have to raise the wind. I'll do that; you'll need only to show me how to have a good time."

"Oh, I'll show you!" he cried. "We're twenty and twenty-two again! The interval's been a dream!"

# THE BEST NOVELS OF THE YEAR

By H. L. MENCKEN

**I**F you have room for a dozen novels in your summer luggage, and want to choose them all from the current crop, let them be the following:

"TONO-BUNGAY," by H. G. Wells (*Duffield*, \$1.50).

"THE POWER OF A LIE," by Johan Bojer (*Kennerley*, \$1.50).

"LEWIS RAND," by Mary Johnston (*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$1.50).

"SEPTIMUS," by W. J. Locke (*Lane*, \$1.50).

"9009," by James Hopper and Fred. R. Bechdolt (*McClure*, \$1.50).

"FRATERNITY," by John Galsworthy (*Putnam*, \$1.50).

"THE POINT OF HONOR," by Joseph Conrad (*McClure*, \$1.50).

"THE ETERNAL BOY," by Owen Johnson (*Dodd-Mead*, \$1.50).

"THE JOURNAL OF A NEGLECTED WIFE," by Mabel Urner (*Dodge*, \$1.50).

"DRAGON'S BLOOD," by Henry M. Rideout (*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$1.50).

"CHERUB DEVINE," by Sewell Ford (*Kennerley*, \$1.50).

"THE MAN IN LOWER TEN," by Mary Rinehart (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50).

This list, I am well aware, will outrage both the editors of the literary monthlies and the floorwalkers of the book departments. No less than half a dozen rank failures are in it, and no less than a dozen best sellers are not in it. Emerson Hough's champion of champions, "54-40 or Fight," is not there. Neither is Dr. Mitchell's "The Red City." Neither are the new novels by Robert Hichens, Anthony Hope Hawkins, Thomas Dixon, F. Hopkinson Smith, David Graham Phillips,

S. J. Weyman, and Beatrice Harradan. Neither are certain other puffed fictions that ogle you most seductively from the book counters. But if you read the twelve books I have named, you will not miss these absentees. My best bets, I opine, are better books than the best sellers. If they are not, I apologize to all concerned and announce my retirement from the critical turf.

No, the twelve are not set down in the order of their merit, and I am not going to make comparisons. They are too unlike for that. The thing that Wells tries to do in "Tono-Bungay" is infinitely apart from the thing that Locke tries to do in "Septimus," and yet each book is an excellent performance. Let me point out only this: that my list offers soothing for all degrees and qualities of taste. If your thirst is for comedy, I give you "Cherub Devine" and "The Eternal Boy"—light-hearted farces with a laugh on every page. If you like serious tales—"deep-down diving," as the Germans say, and "mud upbringing"—I give you "9009" and "The Power of a Lie." If, again, you want romance, there is "Lewis Rand" for you; and if you want riot and carnage, there is "Dragon's Blood." Once more, if your joy is in states of mind rather than in functioning of muscle, there are "Fraternity" and "The Journal of a Neglected Wife." Finally, if you are of the true *cognoscenti* and see merit, not in a startling fable, but in the delicate touches of a perfect craftsman, then I give you "The Point of Honor." But I think you will enjoy all these books, whatever your particular passion. In each the char-

acters are human beings—not fashion plates by Howard Chandler Christy, but human beings.

Four other books came very near getting into my list. One was E. F. Benson's "The Climber," a novel of uncommon merit; and the other three were James Branch Cabell's "Cords of Vanity," Leonid Andreyev's "The Seven Who Were Hanged" and Brian Hooker's "The Right Man." But I am not hedging. Every one of the four surpasses the average best seller, but in each there is some serious defect. "Cords of Vanity," properly speaking, is not a novel at all; and "The Right Man" is so short that it scarcely passes the boundary. In "The Climber" facility often takes the place of insight, and in "The Seven Who Were Hanged" the closing scenes are almost too horrible for holiday reading. But if you have time and room and appetite for sixteen novels instead of twelve, let the quartet I have named go into your satchel.

OF the above sixteen, all have been reviewed in these pages in past months save "DRAGON'S BLOOD," "CHERUB DEVINE" and "THE SEVEN WHO WERE HANGED." The first named is the most important of these. It is, indeed, a novel of great merit and greater promise. A hundred journeyman fictioneers might have imagined the story it tells, but a distressingly small number, even among the aristocrats of the craft, could have told it so well.

This, as you will observe, is a reversal of the usual order of affairs. Your typical American novelist, particularly if he be as young as Mr. Rideout, starts out with an ingenious and astonishing plot, and ends with a commonplace story. Having worked out no philosophy of life he is unable to interpret his own fable, and so it becomes a mere anecdote. Having no understanding of causes, motives and mental processes, he is unable to see behind the actual acts of his characters, and so they become mere actors. Mr. Rideout is not of that school. He has the larger vision. He sees that an act is of

vastly less significance than its cause; that a man cannot be described save in terms of his environment. In a word, he gets beneath the surface of things. His picture is not that of a clawhammer coat making love to a *décolleté* gown, but that of a human being striving against fate.

In its externals, Mr. Rideout's story is a somewhat noisy melodrama. A half-dozen white men and three women, marooned in a God-forsaken Chinese town, are attacked by fanatics and have to fight their way out. They are of widely varying types. One is a silly American missionary—the cause of all the row. Another is his wife—fat, useless and almost yearning for martyrdom. Another is a stolid trader; another is his dubious wife, and yet another is a British outcast with the morals of a horse thief and the courage of a Hugh de Vermandois. Finally, there is Rudolph Hackh—not the hero of the tale, but its Hamlet.

There are all sorts of turbulent doings. The Chinese advance with stink-pot and cannon and try to explode a mine. There are sorties by night and battles by day; men fall and graves are dug; mysterious messengers come and go; the Hugh de Vermandois sallies forth alone and seeks to penetrate the hostile councils; there is even a preposterous duel. But these things are but incidents in the real story, which has its concern with the soul of Hackh. He goes in a somewhat callow youth, oppressed by romance and ready to follow the skirt of a pretty woman to the devil. He comes out a man, every inch of him, with the poise of maturity and experience. Something of Old China's immemorial calm has been fastened upon him. His blood is still German, but his philosophy has a flavor of the Chinese.

Mr. Rideout's methods remind one, more than once, of Joseph Conrad. He has not a little of Conrad's romanticism, and now and then there is a suggestion of Conrad's uncanny skill at achieving atmosphere. The China that he draws seems as real as the brooding jungle that swallowed Kaspar Almayer.

And his view of the eternal mystery of life is essentially that of the great Anglo-Pole. He has still a long and weary road to travel before he may come to Conrad's high place, but he is headed in the right direction.

"CHERUB DEVINE," by Sewell Ford, differs from "Dragon's Blood" as a waltz by Johann Strauss differs from a waltz by Chopin. It is a farce full of the comic spirit—an extravaganza of the cleanest and lightest sort. It leads nowhere, but one laughs immoderately and is the better for it. In more than one place, indeed, it suggests the Court Theater comedies of Pinero—and when I say that, my masters, I am handing out a foaming beaker of the highest praise I keep on tap.

The hero of the tale is one "Cherub" Devine, a youngster from the West who fights his way up from slavery and achieves millions and a character for eccentricity in Wall Street. One day, in an idle moment, he buys a Long Island estate that he has never seen—and then forgets it. When its existence is recalled to him he runs down for a week end, only to discover that the house is still occupied by the late owners, who refuse to move. The rest of the story is given over to the Cherub's encounters with these folk, and particularly with the daughter of the house. The humor arises, not so much out of ridiculous situations, as out of the ludicrous conflict of characters. It is humor that is brisk, fresh and never failing. Not for an instant does the story lose its interest and plausibility. Not for an instant does it wobble.

The penning of such tales is not the highest of the arts, perhaps, but when a man has mastered it he is certainly ahead of the second-rate writers of epics.

"THE SEVEN WHO WERE HANGED," by Leonid Andreyev, the Russian, is a somewhat gruesome attempt to analyze the fear of death. The seven who await the hangman's summons are all Russians, but they range in character from a man of education and intelli-

gence to a degraded and apelike peasant, and from a serene woman of middle age to a silly girl. It is impossible, of course, to determine the accuracy of Andreyev's study, but no one can gainsay its artistry and dramatic effectiveness. It grips your imagination from the first page, and toward the end it makes you shiver in sheer horror. Withal, it has simplicity, clarity and restraint: the sure marks of a master craftsman.

"SOMEONE PAYS," by Noel Barwell (*Lane*, \$1.50), is a tale of seduction, told entirely in the form of letters. There is a gay young English rah-rah boy who writes to his mother, father, sister, aunt, chum and coach; there is a worldly English ecclesiastic who writes to all sorts of persons, from stockbrokers to pious old maids; and there is a little English slavey who writes ungrammatical epistles to her folks at home. There are other correspondents in the tournament, too, and most of them are persons of no little humor and interest. But the story itself is trivial. Its moral (expressed in the title) seems to be that youthful follies are invariably followed by unspeakable suffering. This is a platitude, and like all platitudes it is open to two objections: the first being that it is universally allowed, and so needs no proof, and the second being that it is not true.

JUDGE ROBERT GRANT's new novel, "THE CHIPPENDALES" (*Scribners*, \$1.50), is an elaborate and somewhat fussy study of Boston in transition. On the one hand we have a group of Bostonians of the *ancien régime*, modestly proud of their unearned increment, impatient of the more vulgar ambitions and holding to the Harvardocentric theory of the universe. On the other hand we have a pushing young iconoclast from Maine, who sees nothing sacred in the Cambridge elms and has no reverence whatever for family trees. The entry of this coarse fellow into the circle of the Chippendales gives them a shock almost equal to that which would follow the appearance of a

column of race-track dope in the *Transcript*. But Destiny is behind him, and in the end he triumphs. The fair Georgiana Chippendale extends her finger for his nuptial band, and the other Chippendales agree to be agreeable. Even in Boston, it appears, the sun do move.

Judge Grant's familiarity with Boston ways is indisputable, and so his story is full of verisimilitude and color. But it cannot be said that it shows any feeling for form. It lumbers along, indeed, in a truly Trollopian manner, with the *tempo* ever *largo*. At the end of its 602 finely printed pages one feels that one knows Boston, but—well, it has been no royal road to knowledge.

"A YEAR OUT OF LIFE," by Mary E. Waller (*Appleton*, \$1.50), is a study in feminine folly. The heroine, a young American girl, goes to Germany to live, and after mastering the awful German language asks an eminent German author to let her translate one of his books into English. A correspondence follows and the little American falls in love with her author at long range. One day she casts maiden modesty to the winds and tells him so—and he favors her with a long letter of excellent advice. In the end, nevertheless, he comes near marrying her. How both manage to escape the union makes an unusual, but not very enthralling story. The author has a keen zest for things German, and her descriptions of German life, indoors and out, are full of understanding and charm.

O. HENRY (Sidney Porter), author of "ROADS OF DESTINY" (*Doubleday-Page*, \$1.50), is an insoluble riddle. I give him up. Either he is the best story teller in the world today, or the worst. Sometimes I think he is the one and sometimes I am convinced that he is the other. Maybe he is both.

And why the best? Because no other man now living equals him in the invention of preposterous intrigues and the imagining of fantastic characters. He can borrow an idea from Stevenson

—as in the title story of the present book—and give it so many novel and outlandish twists that it becomes absolutely new. He can construct a farce plot that would have sent Offenbach flying to his music paper, as in "Next to Reading Matter"; and he can bring back again, with all its sentimental melodrama, the Golden West of Bret Harte, as in "Friends in San Rosario." Always his stories have action in them—action and "an air." They are full of queer ambuscades and surprises. The end is never visible at the beginning.

And why, being so marvelously ingenious and resourceful, is Mr. Porter also so bad an artist? Chiefly, because his fancy is a bucking broncho without a rider. He has no conception of the value of restraint. He lays on his effects with a shovel. As he writes, innumerable comic ideas occur to him—bizarre phrases, impossible slang, ridiculous collocations—and he slaps them in at once. If they fit, well and good; if not, he uses them all the same. The result is that his characters all speak the same tongue. At the beginning of a story, now and then, he manages to keep them differentiated, but before long they are all spouting Porterese.

Again, this same exuberance leads to a painful piling up of snickers. In "The Discounters of Money," for example, a capital story is spoiled by too much smartness. There are twenty wheezes to a page. Instead of helping on the tale, they make it bewildering and unreal. You grow interested in a character study—and the author asks you to halt at every third line and marvel at some banal wit from Broadway.

But it is an ungrateful task to point out defects in a writer so amusing as Mr. Porter. At his worst, true enough, he is very, very bad, but at his best he is irresistible. Some day, let us hope, he will acquire resolution enough to stick to the letter of his text, no matter how great the temptation to fly off into literary roulades. Meanwhile, it might benefit him to give a month or two of hard study to a book called "In Babel," by George Ade—a book con-



taining some of the best comedies in the English language.

JACQUES FUTRELLE's latest book, entitled "*ELUSIVE ISABEL*" (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50), is a brisk tale of diplomatic intrigue and adventure in Washington. Mr. Futrelle endeavors, not to explore the human soul, but to tell a story and he does it very well. There is always something doing. Once you are made aware, in the second chapter, of the great Latin alliance against England and the United States, you will read on to the end. And as you proceed you will achieve such a liking for the fair Miss Isabel Thorne that, in the last chapter, the sleuth-hero who carries her off in his automobile will excite your unalloyed envy.

"ONE FAIR DAUGHTER," by Fred-eric P. Ladd (*Kennerley*, \$1.50), is a mildly interesting attempt to explore the psychology of love. A beautiful and intellectual woman, married to a rich but yodling German, meets a fascinating young rector, and the two love. To escape her dachshund of a husband, the wife goes upon a holiday trip down Aiken way. The rector follows posthaste and soon the two are tripping the primrose path. It doesn't take the rector long to decide that preaching is no longer for him; so he returns to New York to resign his pulpit and seek a trade more suitable to a man of his newly acquired sinfulness. While he is away the yodling husband visits his wife, and is accorded a polite if not cordial welcome. When the rector hears of it, he gives the poor girl a sound berating and bids her good-bye. His conception of a love affair, he explains, is indissolubly associated with a notion of monogamy on the part of the woman.

A great many worse ideas than this one have been put into novels by American fictioneers, but Mr. Ladd, unluckily, does not execute nearly so well as he plans. The rector has no little verity, and the wife, particularly toward the end, is depicted with insight, but the *männerchor* husband is

drawn so grotesquely that he spoils the picture.

Half a dozen books exemplifying or dealing with the art of the theater are on the spring list. The most conspicuous of them is an extraordinarily bulky and weighty volume by W. T. Price called "*THE ANALYSIS OF PLAY CONSTRUCTION AND DRAMATIC PRINCIPLE*" (*Price*, \$5.00). Here we have more than four hundred large pages of fine print devoted to a demonstration of the thesis that the true dramatist is made and not born. In order to write a good play, says Mr. Price, one must first understand the anatomy and physiology of plays. Not content with merely saying this, Mr. Price proceeds to prove it, and his proof, it must be admitted, is triumphant and well rubbed in. Let the fledgling dramatic genius but read the book, and if it accomplishes nothing else, it will at least cure him of his delusion that the managers who decline his plays do so because they hate all Christians.

Mr. Price's analysis of the elements which enter into the make-up of a modern drama is elaborately minute, and in the main, entirely accurate. He is disposed perhaps to dwell too much upon manner and too little upon matter, but this fault is inherent in his task. One may reduce all harmony to a book of rules, but it is impossible to teach a tone-deaf man to write a string quartet. In the same way, it is impossible to turn an ass into a Pinero; but, all the same, the ambitious beginner who studies Mr. Price's book will put it down with a sound knowledge of important matters which, unaided, he might have groped for blindly for years.

"*THE FAITH HEALER*," a mystical drama in four acts by William Vaughn Moody, author of "*The Great Divide*" (*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$1.00), comes next. This piece has been put upon the stage in the West, but at this writing it seems unlikely that it will reach Broadway, and if it does, it will certainly make no dent in the receipts of the current obscenodrames. It is

altogether too elusive and shadowy for that. The touch of Maeterlinck is upon it, and at other times it recalls Björnson. Again, one hears echoes of Ibsen, of the Niebelung legends and of Hauptmann in his more fantastic moods. Altogether, it strikes a new note in the American drama. Cheap melodramas of hypnotism and parlor magic we have in plenty, but the play of true mysticism is almost unknown among us.

The principal characters in "THE FAITH HEALER" are Ulrich Michaelis, the healer, and Rhoda Williams, a girl of somewhat subnormal purity. Michaelis, hearing the call to go forth and cure, makes himself ready for solitary vigils in the vast open spaces. His divine appointment, he believes, demands other-worldliness, detachment, renunciation. And it seems to be sound, this idea, for when he comes back to his fellow men, a word from him makes a bed-ridden woman rise and walk—greatly to the astonishment of her Darwin-worshipping husband. But then Michaelis encounters Rhoda and his power seems to leave him. Is it that love is not for the divinely anointed? Or is it that Rhoda's sin has crippled him? Rhoda herself begs him to seek new strength by leaving her, but he refuses to go. In love, he seems to conclude, there may be even more power than in renunciation. . . . And as he clasps Rhoda to him the sick woman walks again.

This is a play full of suggestions and overtones; a play of the fourth dimension, illusory, dimly lighted, artistic; a play to read on a mountain top—but not one to entertain the world-weary white-goods buyer, the brandied bucket-shop man and their respective sultanas.

ANOTHER drama of an unusual sort is "SWANWHITE" ("*Schwanenweise*") by the sinister Swede, August Strindberg, admirably translated by Francis J. Ziegler (*Brown*, \$1.00). Here we have Strindberg in a happy, idyllic mood, telling a pretty fairy tale. It is as if Richard Strauss were to write a Wiener waltz, or Uncle Joe Cannon

were to essay the vilanelle. The terrible Strindberg of "*Gläubiger*," "*Mit dem Feuer Spielen*" and "*The Father*"—the maniacal woman hater, heretic and iconoclast—becomes a latter-day Hans Andersen and spins a charming little story of enchanted castles and a love that conquers death. After all, the man is human—and the discovery that he is gives one an agreeable surprise.

"SWANWHITE," it is announced, is the first of a series of translations of contemporary foreign plays. The publishers deserve the thanks of the public for their enterprise and congratulations upon the many excellencies of their first venture.

"AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME," by Major Guy Du Maurier (*Harpers*, \$1.25), had a brief and inglorious career on Broadway, and the critics were disposed to dismiss it with a sneer, but, as a matter of fact, a reading proves it to be a play of considerable merit. The author is a novice, true enough, but he is by no means a bungler. His dialogue is often good, his characters are plausible and clearly outlined, and his situations are managed with no little skill. It is easy to imagine the climax of the second act sending a thrill of horror through the first-night London audience. To us it seems bald melodrama—but we are not Englishmen, and there is no German fleet hovering off our coast.

"A MOTLEY JEST," by Oscar Fay Adams (*Sherman-French*, \$1.00), is a good-humored attempt to write variations upon themes by William Shakespeare. It contains two clever sketches—one a Shakespearean fantasy in which many of the Bard's personages appear, and the other a sixth act to "*The Merchant of Venice*"—and no less a pundit than Dr. Rolfe appends a note of applause. A pleasant oddity, with no little merit.

THE author of "*MIND POWER*" (*Progress Co.*, \$1.50) starts out with the following thesis: "There exists in

nature a dynamic mental principle—a mind power, pervading all space—immanent in all things." Inasmuch as this is not true, it may seem to be useless to follow him further, but as a matter of fact, the conclusions that he reaches later on are so astounding that his book fascinates by its very *grotesquerie*. He gives elaborately minute directions, for example, for "fascinating," whereby it appears that if one looks intently *through*—not *into*—the eyes of another, that other will straightway become one's slave. There are many other similar recipes and incantations, and the book, in general, is a veritable encyclopedia of the so-called "New Thought." At bottom, of course, this "New Thought," like the Emmanuel Movement, Spiritualism and all the other quack "sciences," is based upon the idea that human intelligence is a sort of independent and all-pervasive ether or juice, with power not only to modify matter, but also to create and destroy it. This idea is a brother to the popular notion that Friday is an unlucky day. It is difficult, perhaps, to disprove it, but it is not at all difficult to show that the less a man believes it the more civilized is that man.

**THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH—**  
by Henry Frank.

(*Fenno*, \$1.50)

A popular statement of the case against Christianity. The author is reverent and earnest, and his book is a good one, but the pantheism that he offers as a substitute for the Christian miracle cult is not beyond criticism.

**BEHIND THE VEIL IN PERSIA AND TURKISH ARABIA—**

by M. E. and A. Hume-Griffith.

(*Lippincott*, \$3.00)

An exceedingly interesting and intimate picture of life in the Near East, with plenty of good illustrations. The authors had unusual facilities for observation, and they write with simplicity and sympathy.

**HOW IT IS DONE—**

by Archibald Williams.

(*Nelson*, \$2.00)

A clear, understandable explanation of the marvels of modern engineering—tunnels, bridges, aqueducts, canals, etc. Mr. Williams knows exactly how to make such things comprehensible to the lay mind. There are many diagrams and illustrations.

**THE STORY OF A STREET—**

by Frederick Trevor Hill.

(*Harpers*, \$2.00)

The true romance of Wall Street—particularly the romance of Wall Street in the olden time. A most interesting contribution to the history of New York. With many illustrations.

**TROLLEY FOLLY—**

by Henry Wallace Phillips.

(*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50)

Another collection of Mr. Phillips's breezy short stories—chiefly of the West. The worst of them is amusing, and the best of them, "The Reverse of a Medal," is a little masterpiece.

**LANIER OF THE CAVALRY—**

by General Charles King.

(*Lippincott*, \$1.25)

Another of General King's romances of the Army. The scene is a frontier post in the 70's, and the dashing young officers, pretty girls and treacherous Indians of the author's earlier stories are all there.

**A KING IN KHAKI—**

by H. K. Webster.

(*Appleton*, \$1.50)

A brisk tale of adventure at the edge of the Spanish Main. The hero has an exciting bout with a soulless millionaire, and celebrates his victory by marrying his enemy's daughter. An excellent story for a summer afternoon.

**ON THE ROAD TO ARDEN—**

by Margaret Morse.

(*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$1.50)

A lively little pastoral comedy with a double love story. Miss

Morse has something of old Chaucer's love for a spring day and a merry laugh. There are touches of poetry, too.

**WITH THOSE THAT WERE—**

by Francis W. Grattan.

(Broadway Pub. Co., \$1.50)

A thick book of dull yarns.

**MEMOIRS OF A SENATE PAGE—**

by Christian F. Eckloff.

(Broadway Pub. Co., \$1.50)

Mildly interesting pictures of Washington in 1855-59, with some account of the principal antebellum pundits and sages. Too much borrowing from the Congressional Record.

**THE MEMOIRS OF A FAILURE—**

by D. W. Kittredge.

(James, \$1.50)

A study in egomania and inefficiency, clumsily managed, but not without its moments.

**THE BRONZE BELL—**

by Louis Joseph Vance.

(Dodd-Mead, \$1.50)

A fast-moving tale of adventure in two hemispheres, with a hero who routs men and devils. Its ingenuity and plausibility are unflagging.

**THE GLORY OF THE CONQUERED—**

by Susan Glaspell.

(Stokes, \$1.50)

A novel of uneven quality, overstrained in places, but with abundant merit in other places. Its theme is woman's love and sacrifice.

**THE MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW—**

by Oliver Cabot.

(Appleton, \$1.50)

A story of lost personality. It is not a new theme, but it is handled with resourcefulness and skill, and the result is a story that kills time very pleasantly.

**SERVITUDE—**

by Irene Osgood.

(Dana Estes, \$1.50)

A rip-snorting yarn of adventure in the Barbary States a hundred

years ago. The hero starts out as William Brown and ends as the Earl of Rathdowney.

**THE LOST CABIN MINE—**

by Frederick Niven.

(Lane, \$1.50)

A tale of the grim and inhospitable Southwest, conventional in plan, but with originality in the writing of it. A sort of Scotch Monte Cristo and the Apache Kid II, prospector and philosopher, are the principal figures.

**PLAIN ECONOMIC FACTS—**

by Ambrose M. Thomas.

(Cochrane, \$3.00)

A rhapsody on high and low finance, full of startling theories, apt alliteration and atrocious grammar. A true literary curiosity.

**AN UNFINISHED DIVORCE—**

by Francis D. Gallatin.

(Cochrane, \$1.50)

A didactic romance, in which the divorce question is discussed with ponderous banality.

**MADRID—**

by A. F. Calvert.

(Lane, \$1.50)

Not a guide book, but an interesting volume describing the daily doings of the Madrileños and the places and institutions of their city. No less than 453 full-page pictures.

**THE NEW REGIME—**

by John Ira Brant.

(Cochrane, \$1.00)

A romance describing life in the year 2202. The work of an amateur entirely devoid of talent.

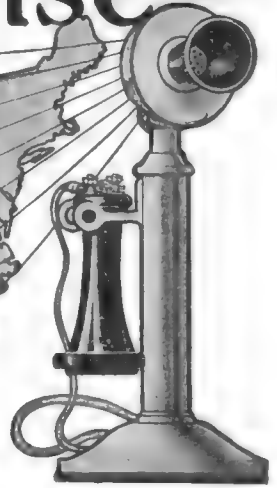
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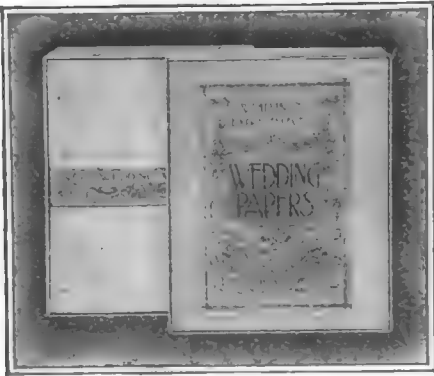


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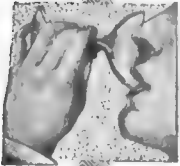
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red raven not only acts on  
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of the natural car-  
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tles the  
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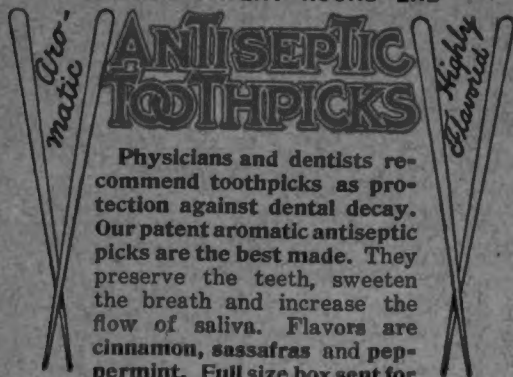
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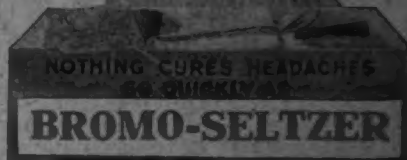
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